BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/tracts-american-unitarian-association_1843_16

TRACTS

OF

THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

FIRST SERIES.....VOL. XVI.

CONTAINING NUMBERS CLXXX. TO CXCI.

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
134 Washington Street.
1843.

BX
9813
A5
v. 16

CONTENTS OF VOL. XVI.

PAGE

What Gives Support in Death, - - - - - 1

Christ the Way to God, - - - - - - 13

On the Nature and Province of Natural and Revealed Religion, - - - - - - - - - 25

On Experimental Religion, - - - - - - 53

Righteousness the Central Principle of Christianity, and the True Basis of the Unitarian Denomination, 69

Religious Forms and Observances, - - - 104

Unitarianism Not a New Doctrine, but Genuine Christianity, - - - - - - - - 117

An Address Delivered at the Funeral of Rev. William Ellery Channing, D. D., October 7, 1842, 157

Earnestness in Religion, - - - - - - 187

Small Sins, - - - - - - - - 207

"What Thinkest Thou?" or Ten Questions Answered, - - - - - - - - - 221

The Eighteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 30, 1843, - - - - - - 243

3802

1st Series. No. 180.

WHAT GIVES SUPPORT IN DEATH?

By REV. M. I. MOTTE.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

July, 1842.

Price 3 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, 2 SCHOOL STREET.

WHAT GIVES SUPPORT IN DEATH?

We have heard it said by our Orthodox friends, that Unitarianism may be a very good religion to live by, but that it will not do to die by. It seems to be generally conceded that its influences on the living are cheering and tranquillizing enough; so that, if we were to live forever here it might answer the purpose of a religion for man. But the dark visions of a dying hour are to shake the soul, — and then, it has been prophetically argued, we shall need a sustaining principle which our faith does not involve.

Such a defect must, of course, be fatal to any religious system. We would not have that for our religion, which, false to its highest purposes, allows us only a few fleeting years of the happiness of the brute which perisheth, and in our time of greatest need, on the eve of that event to which all true religion by its very nature must constantly direct its regard, will fail us. If it cannot face death, it is not from Him who has appointed death as the common entrance to the world in which we are to live forever.

I ask the reader's attention then to the considerations which recommend Unitarianism as the religion for the dying. It is rather remarkable, and a proof of the futil-

ity of the charge in question, that from the same quarter is often heard another directly opposite to it. We are told that liberal views weaken the sanctions of religion; that they do not terrify the sinner enough with threats of eternal wrath, but lull him to sleep in careless security, deceiving him into perdition. Now, surely, that which tranquillizes too much cannot agitate with unappeasable alarms at the same time.

But without regarding this contradiction, let us proceed to the question. We appeal, 1st, to experience. This alone might be thought decisive. What is the fact? Do we not see people among us die every day with the usual calmness and hope? Who has not witnessed the sufficiency of Unitarian Christianity to sustain the parting spirit?

Not only so, but I appeal to common experience, whether Christians of every name do not, in general, find support at the final hour in the common and simple principles of rational piety, rather than in the subtleties of scholastic metaphysics. We have stood by the bed of death, and seen our faith do all which religion could do; and even when we expected to hear the complex creed, to which such vaunted importance was attached through life, appealed to with triumphant confidence, though it was not formally renounced, yet we found that, after all, the soul leaned, with a Unitarian's trust, on the simple goodness of God, undisguised and unbought. At such an hour the first principles of the attributes of Deity are all. The spirit has no time to trifle longer with fine-spun speculations and ingenious reconcilements of contradictory dogmas. Realities are dealing with it then; and though it may still, from habit, attach a formal importance to its system, yet its value is believed rather than felt; or if felt, it is felt through the power of association.

It has been connected so long in the mind with religious hopes and consolations, that they may seem inseparable; and yet the association has been none the less entirely arbitrary and accidental.

It will not be denied, too, that sometimes the holders of this stern system, in all its literal strictness, die with great depression and dismay; and we are quite willing to admit that this may be the effect of physical causes — of constitutional temperament, or the nature of the disease, but we think it equally fair to plead that the despondence which some liberal Christians may have evinced, might be attributed to the same causes.

It may be said that Unitarians have oftener renounced their views in the hour of death than Orthodox Christians; but we can boldly deny this, if, as I have just remarked, the latter so often virtually renounce theirs, by laying no stress upon them, when the theory requires that all stress should be laid upon them, if they are thought true and important at all. We care little for the name of Unitarian, but all the inquiry which the writer has made, and the personal observations of several years in the ministry among Trinitarians, gives him confidence in asserting that, in reality, whatever names might be professed, very few die other than Unitarian. What he would consider a consistent Trinitarian death he has never witnessed.

Of the few who have recanted our sentiments on their death-beds, the explanation is easy; while it is hard to explain the tacit renunciation of opposite sentiments consistently with their truth. For consider who are the Unitarians. Many are called so who are anything but religious men. They are called so simply because they protest against the opposite doctrine; and if merely in disgust at the excesses of fanaticism they will rank them-

selves with us, we cannot help it; but we will not allow either their lives or their deaths to be appealed to for illustration of the influence of our principles. If they have not lived the life of the righteous, whatever they may call themselves, we cannot look for them to die the death of the righteous. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man, and of that alone, is peace. When the profligate Unitarian in belief is laid, conscience stricken and appalled, on his death-bed, he may be terrified by reproaches within and exhortations without to profess anything he is assured so solemnly will give him peace. The mind of even a good man must be strong to withstand the measures often resorted to, in the weakness and agitation of the last moments, to effect a conversion. He is surrounded by dark countenances boding despair, and plied with warning, threat, remonstrance and entreaty, to pronounce one word, which, he is told, will convert horror into joy, and not in himself alone, but for all those who are dearer to him than self. But when, in addition to these influences, the dark retrospect of a life of sin bows down the dying man's soul, it is not strange that he should catch at any hope which is held out to him so prominently.

Again we ask, who are the Unitarians? They are they very often who have been Trinitarians. They are they who have forsaken the faith in which they were educated; the faith of their fathers and of their childhood, endeared to them for so long a time by thousands of the tenderest associations. This faith they have taken the bold and momentous step of deliberately renouncing. Now we know how vividly the recollections of our early years come out in the mind, though the memory of intervening scenes is dim, as old age draws on; and the serious reflections of a sick bed recur with natural fondness

to that period of our lives when our feelings were so different and so joyous. We dwell with delight on every circumstance connected with so much happiness; and the remembrance of the faith which our parents taught us, appeals then to our tenderest feelings and most deep-founded prejudices. Our reason has been entirely convinced of its falsehood; but dotage and a death-bed are not the time and place for reason to triumph in. How often we hear men of the soundest minds lament that, in despite of rational conviction to the contrary, their first religious impressions will continue to exert an unhappy influence on their feelings. How much more likely is this to be the case in the imbecility of second childhood.

It was so after the Reformation. Many Protestants returned, in the decay of their minds, to the errors with which their youth had been too deeply imbued, for reason to enjoy a lasting victory. This generation has to war with many other difficulties, in their return to the simplicity of the Gospel, besides argument. But our children will reap the full benefit, and bless our memory for it. We may suffer possibly. We may have to struggle against morbid fears of death, which nature and nature's God would never have inflicted; and in the anguish of a factitious melancholy and desperation, we may even go back, in some cases, for relief to those very doctrines that have diseased our apprehensions. For they first cause the disease, and then offer the remedy. But the remedy is as uncertain, violent and desperate, as the disease is painful and unnecessary.

The disease is unnecessary, I say. It is not natural. This cowering and extreme dread of dying, is the fruit of superstitious fancies. One must be indoctrinated in them before he will tremble so slavishly at a common event,

entirely in the order of nature, and which thousands undergo every day, and every hour: — twenty-nine millions yearly, according to late tables of mortality, eighty thousand daily, three thousand three hundred hourly, and fifty-three every minute. The Father of the human family has not been so cruel as to attach necessarily this gloomy horror to the exit he has made indispensable to all the myriads of his children.

Look out through the world. See whether men die with such hideous apprehensions, unless they have been taught and trained to do so. Even where the light of nature is all they have to cheer them, death is not so revolting, so shocking a prospect. Men willingly expose themselves to death in multitudes, to death in its most violent and terrible forms, for trivial objects. On the battle-field scores of thousands will meet it in one day without flinching. Count the daring souls that seem to court it on tempestuous oceans. None enjoy life with a keener relish; and yet they give it up without the tormenting anxieties of many who are miserably tired of life, and yet more miserably afraid to die.

The righteous hath hope in his death: the righteous everywhere, where the depressing influences of artificial systems of divinity have not perverted their natural confidence in the rectitude and goodness of their Maker. They believe, almost instinctively, that in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is, at least, not punished by him for want of an abstract doctrine.

The uncertain light of nature may not go farther than this. It may yet give assurance of future happiness. But it certainly does not terrify the good with threats of future misery. And is the Gospel of grace, the glad tidings of great joy it was to be to all nations, a less kind

dispensation than that of nature? The Gospel which we hold only confirms nature's judgment of the good, and stamps certainty on their hopes. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ; for the good death has no sting, and the grave no victory.

For let us come to a closer examination of our doctrine. It will not be denied that it gives the cheering assurance of a future life, as clearly as any other. According to any form of Christianity, Christ hath brought life and immortality to light,—hath illustrated immortal life, throwing the light of certainty on it. There is certainly nothing in our opinions to weaken his illustration of this primary truth: for there is nothing in them to obscure the general evidences of the truth of Christianity —nothing, we often repeat, to make Christianity seem less probable; but much in them, far more than in the opposite views, that on the very first blush of the case, makes it seem likely to have come from an infinitely merciful Father.

So far then revelation is of equal value to all: the outworks which defend it, of equal strength for all. The next inquiry is into the nature of the distinguishing tenets; or rather tenet: for but a single point literally and properly divides Unitarians from Trinitarians. What is there then in the nature of the doctrine of the Trinity to support the minds of the dying? Is there confidence in proportion to the number of their divine protectors? Do we need the strength of more than the one Supreme Omnipotent to uphold and give us assurance? Could we possibly have more than the strength of One, however delegated it might be to others from that One? Could we conceive of more than One? Is not the idea of One, in fact, better adapted to tranquillize and re-assure? One strictly in substance and in person? In the confusion

and amazement of the dying man's mind, it is of special importance that the religious conceptions on which it leans for support, should be clear and distinct. It cannot then comprehend, if it ever could, the subtile distinctions and labored sophisms of metaphysical theology. It needs the vivid image of one definite God and Father to sustain its trust, to attract its aspirations. The Savior of the world it may think of too, and will think of with delight and gratitude; but it is as the *Son* of *God, through* whom it has been blessed with the Father's gracious assurances. Thus alone it reposes a trust full and undistracted on one all absorbing object.

And what character does it need in this One, to make Him the object of unfailing and affectionate trust? Is it not that character under which Unitarians are so peculiarly, and, it has been almost objected to them, excessively, fond of representing him? The character of a benign Father. As such we delight to contemplate him. As such alone we can regard him with that perfect love which casteth out fear. As such alone, when flesh and heart fail, he is felt to be the strength of our heart and our portion for evermore. But in no modification can a Trinity of persons be viewed as this Father.

But at this point of the argument, the value of the abstract doctrine of the Trinity is generally given up. It is conceded, that it is not this doctrine in itself which is needed to sustain the souls of the dying; but the doctrine of the atonement, which, it is contended, is inseparable from it. But this necessary connexion has never been proved. We see them separated, in fact, in the belief of numberless nominal Trinitarians. The doctrine from which they derive their name they say little about, while they cling fondly to the other. They require to be instructed elaborately in the conventional, fanciful, connex-

ion between them, before they can see it. There are many professed Unitarians, moreover, who believe one without the other; and in fact all of them hope for salvation more or less directly through the Savior's death. We do not generally believe in the atonement as a satisfaction of God's justice, it is true; and this is the only view of it under which, with any show of reason, it can pretend to be essentially connected with the Trinity. We do not believe in this; and we think, in our dying hour, we shall repose with a more unmingled confidence in the mercy of our God, for not believing it. For it seems to us incompatible with that instinctive sense of the goodness of a Father, which is worth far more to the meditations of a death-bed than all the ingenuity of all men's labored systems of theology. He is too good to require that his mercy should be purchased for us. We need his pardon. We have no hope but in his pardon. But we believe he pardons freely on repentance. For as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Why do men talk so of needing any better security than the mercy of the All-gracious? There cannot be any better; for there cannot be any other source of security after all. The most complicated systems of salvation, if they were true, must emanate from his mercy at first. To his first free, unbought mercy, therefore, we go back, and will there find peace for our souls.

What is the security which any doctrine of purchased forgiveness can bestow, compared with what it must detract from our filial love and fearless desire for the presence of a gracious Father, attracting us to him by the native kindliness of his character? We may have no fear of punishment, and yet, for all that, feel death an unwelcome change; if it be a change of all our objects of affection on earth, for an object of awe, but not of free

cordial love in heaven. God may look very stern to us, though his hand is bound up from striking: and we will not then go to him as readily as if we had habitually loved him for being merciful without a bond.

Reader, it is our aim to inspire you with a love for your Supreme Benefactor. We believe our doctrines singularly adapted to produce this effect, if you are faithful to make them more to you than abstract doctrines. Let them instil the practical principles, and the devout sentiments which are their legitimate product, when held, not as matters of faction, but of conscience and of the heart. So shall you live the life of the righteous, and then, consequently, die the death of the righteous; a death full of hope and peace. You may not pretend to fanatic raptures at the thought; for in fact you may not find life so gloomy, as less cheerful views than yours would make it seem, and therefore you may not be so anxious to leave it. But living a life made happy by unmixed gratitude for its numberless blessings, you will stand calmly waiting for the call of the Father, whom your religion has taught you to reverence, but not to dread, and serenely pass to his higher and better presence. Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear no evil; for he is with you; his rod and his staff, they comfort you. You will find your religion a good religion to die by, if, yea because, it is a good religion to live by, and you will not give it up. This God, whom we have been taught to call "Father in heaven," and not Trinity, or Triune Jehovah, nor any such hard name never taught by him who came expressly to "reveal the Father"—"this God," in the language of the Psalmist, "is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."

1st Series. No. 181.

CHRIST THE WAY TO GOD.

By Rev. CONVERSE FRANCIS, D. D.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

August, 1842.

Price 3 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, 2 SCHOOL STREET.

CHRIST THE WAY TO GOD.

THERE are few passages in the New Testament more strikingly significant than these words of Paul to the Ephesians, — "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye, who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

We learn the value of some things only by contrast. The evil is necessary to make the good felt as it should be. Have you ever understood the blessing of health so well, as when you have risen from the bed of sickness, and are out again, with vigorous step and keen senses, in the large air and sweet light of God's beautiful world? The first time in your life when you found relief from pain, was also the first time in your life when you thoroughly felt the meaning of pleasure. Without fatigue the sweetness of rest is unknown. Where there is no labor there is no recreation.

Thus in the common experiences of life. So also we sometimes learn to estimate the privileges and the power of religion best by contrast. In this way Paul, in the above passage of his letter to the Church at Ephesus, in-

structs his brethren to value the blessings of their new faith. The difference between what they had been and what they were, they would find to be the measure of that good, which the Gospel of Christ had brought to them. They had not shared even the imperfect helps to be found in "the commonwealth of Israel." Blinded by the idolatry, which sticks fast in the outward and the sensual, they had been strangers to the soul's true life and blessed hope, as these are inspired by faith in God. But now they, who were once so far from heavenly things, were brought into close union with them by the ministry of divine wisdom in Christ, whose blood on the cross had sealed his word of salvation. From such a contrast, so full of striking significance, the Ephesian Christians might learn what gratitude they owed for the holy faith under which they then lived.

Now we are to consider that here, in the case of the Ephesians of old, we may find the type or illustration of a general spiritual fact in the human condition. This fact was not peculiar to those whom Paul addressed. It reappears continually wherever man is found, as indeed does every fact which has its conditions in the soul. If we are brought to understand what Christ and Christianity are, we, as well as they of old, must feel the force of the contrast I have spoken of. The recorded history of man's spirit every where, in its passage from darkness to light, from struggle to calmness, from barrenness or scoffing to the life of faith and improvement, is little else than a representation of this contrast. To this religious experiences, rightly understood, bear an affecting testimony. Even when these experiences, as may frequently be the case, are largely mingled with the outbreaks of fanaticism, still there is a germ of vital truth, a central reality,

in them, — else they would not be the expression, as they often are, of what an earnest and true soul has to tell of its progress. The rhetoric in such cases may be in the bad style of coarseness and exaggeration; but the fact, which that rhetoric aims to signify, may be a high and solemn fact. The consciousness or the observation of every day testifies, that the heart of man has its experiences, — its history of joys and sorrows, of darkness and light, of victory and defeat. Through these transitions it works its way, with various success, in business, in friendship, in labor, in all the common relations of life. Surely it cannot be that in religion, its highest concernment, it should have no history, or, which is the same thing, no experiences. Disgust with fanaticism must not make us forgetful of the great realities of the Christian life. We must not be unwisely blind to the fact, that the religious improvement, or, to use the better word, the regeneration of the human soul, implies necessarily a contrast between the past and the present, and in some cases a sharp and searching contrast.

Let us consider how we may apply for our own edification this being "far-off" and being "made nigh," of which Paul speaks to his Ephesian brethren.

1. May it not be stated as a fact in spiritual history, that there is such a thing as alienation from truth and righteousness? The question so obviously has its answer, that to ask it seems almost a piece of simplicity. Perhaps the saddest, the most fearful expression to be found in any book, is that used by the Apostle, "without God in the world." But sad and fearful as it is, does it not describe an actual condition of man now as truly as it did eighteen hundred years ago, — here in America as

well as there at Ephesus? Not that we worship images for divinities, as the people of that city worshipped the image of their "great goddess Diana." No, we do not that. But if we should say, that some in modern days, in Christian lands, do even worse than that, would it be quite a caricature or an extravagance? For, is it not worse to have no reverence for any thing divine, than to worship an image, which, to the sincere though deluded devotee may represent, however coarsely, his relation to the Infinite? There is a kind of heathen darkness, which may be found now as well as under ancient paganism, — here as well as in barbarous lands; I mean the darkness of a heart emptied of all faith, — not merely of faith in traditional forms of religion, but of faith in any thing good, and so of faith in God. Is it not possible to live here amidst the sweet or awful tokens of the divine presence, where the spirit of wisdom and love is breathing around us, and the light of the upper world comes down in gentle shining, or broad flashing to the open eye, — where the seeds of all holy influences are sown broadcast, ready to spring up around us and yield a harvest of immortal life, if we will but take it, — where the truths of heaven's inspiration speak from the pages of the Bible, and invite that which is divine in man's soul to answer to that which is divine in them; — is it not possible, I say, to live in the midst of all these tokens of the supreme mind, and yet be "without God in the world"? Would to heaven that it were not! Would to heaven that to say it is possible were only fabulous talk, or the romance of exaggeration never realized. But no, — in simple truth it is a reality, — to a thoughtful mind the saddest and sternest reality among the many strange wanderings of a fallen race, — the most sorrowful proof that we may

sleep the sleep of death even when the spirit of God is nearest with its guidance and its grace.

There is indeed a sense, in which no one can be "without God in the world;" for He, in whom "we live and move and have our being," is always around us and over us, in the supplies of his mercy and in the measures of his Providence, whether we apprehend these or not,—just as the heart beats, and the blood rolls through the system, even when we think not of it. But, so far as depends on the exercise of our spiritual faculties, we may be without God in the world, — that is, without any apprehension of Him or union with Him by faith, reverence, or love: and if there be for the soul a state of more dreary desolation than this, I know not what it is. Yet shall not many be found in this state, who still go through life with an easy heart and a smiling countenance, as if nothing were the matter with them, — as if the frame of the spirit within were all right and healthy? Worldliness, sensuality, frivolity, the lusts and the pride of life, — these take possession of the soul: the throne of God, which should be erected there, is cast down; the light of the golden candlestick, which should shine there, is quenched.

So that other expression,— "without Christ,"— has a meaning for us and for our times. For do not multitudes live in a Christian country, under the shadow of Christianity, to whom Christ is an absolutely unmeaning name? Either they think not of him in any way, or think of him passively, just as they learn by hearsay he is thought of by others. Indeed we are apt to deem ourselves quite creditably pious, if we believe in Jesus as a personage of the past, who was empowered in some way or other — we hardly know how — to do or suffer a great deal in our stead,— if we believe that there was

a work of salvation, which he was to go through and achieve, and the benefits of which are by some divine arrangement made over to us now. A large part of the so called faith in Christ amounts only to this, or to little more than this. As for the faith constituted and expressed by the life of Christ in the soul, by being in union with him in consequence of sharing the same spirit, so that we may be children of God as he was the Son of God,— all, in short, which the Apostle means by his favorite expression — "Christ within you, the hope of glory,"— this is a thing which practically men feel to be strange, and doubt if it has any meaning; and they, who say that herein lies the true faith in Jesus, shall perchance be deemed visionary or extravagant. So it comes to pass, that virtually we are "without Christ," even though we pray in his name, and contend for that divine authority, which belongs to him in the church. That beautiful and holy life of the heaven-sent Man of Nazareth,— so beautiful and holy that only here and there some few rise to the apprehension of it, and it stands in our midst a perpetual rebuke to the low standard and the sinful practices which Christian nations tolerate and even commend,— this manifestation of the godlike and the divine in the midst of us, practically passes for little or nothing, though if understood aright it is indeed an *Immanuel*, God with us. The word of him, who spake as man never spake, comes to be regarded as a thing, which it is proper perhaps to respect, and to enshrine in formalities; but if one would apply its awakening, life-giving power to individuals or to communities, he shall be quite likely to be deemed a mere theorist, if indeed he be not named a disturber. When the case stands thus, may we not say, in Paul's language, that men are "far off" from

the very idea of Christ, and have yet to be baptized into his spirit, before they can know what his mission was at first, or what now is its meaning for ourselves?

I have spoken of the manner, in which the apostle's expressions — "without Christ and without God in the world,"— have their application at this day, as well as in their first use. This is one side of the contrast, of which I spoke. Let us now turn to the other.

2. But now, says Paul, "in Christ Jesus ye, who were sometime far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ," that is, by the divine efficacy of his mission hallowed and sealed by his death on the cross. May we too, like those of Ephesus, be thus made nigh? Doubtless we may. We are so, whenever instead of being without God and without Christ, we are with God and with Christ. To receive into the sources of our own spirit-life that vital power of renewal, which the Son of God can impart to us, is to be "made nigh" by him. Our condition is so constituted, that we receive many of our best blessings through the mediation of other beings. One is the instrument of good to another. How much beneficent agency goes forth from the father or the mother to the child! In the growth of the intellect, how much do we owe to the contact of our minds with the mind of a skilful and kind instructer! So, in civil affairs, our rights are protected and our social progress secured by the labors of wise and far-seeing statesmen. And in the moral world, when some pure and gifted spirit looks on the face of the higher truths, till his soul has caught their brightness, and he turns to his fellow-men, and reflects the heavenly radiance among them, how many see by that light what they saw not before! So in other cases. Thus a system of mediations perpetually runs through human affairs;

and even in the most common processes of life, one becomes a minister to others.

Now a fact analogous to these, but of a far higher order of influence, is found in the mediation of Jesus Christ,— a mediation peculiar, distinct, and divine in its character, a channel for the conveyance of that holy power, by which the soul is saved from spiritual death, and brought into spiritual life. Christianity was, I conceive, in the true sense of the expression, a supernatural movement in God's moral government for the rescue of man from darkness and sin. The mission of Jesus was stamped with a divine authority by those miraculous works, which no man could do except God were with him, illustrated as they are by the light reflected from those other tokens of God's peculiar presence in him, which shine with a significance not to be mistaken. I see not how, upon principles of just reasoning, the miraculous parts of the history of Jesus can be separated from the other parts. To me they seem woven together in one beautiful whole, wherein appears the broad impress of the hand of God. In those supernatural works wrought in wisdom and love, combined with the other evidences that the spirit was given without measure unto Jesus, and taken in connexion with that divine Life whose strange beauty still shines upon us "like a star that dwells apart," we have the proof that he spoke and acted under the guidance and by the authority of God. Here appeared among men one, who dwelt in union with the Father, one into whom the spirit of wisdom, love, and truth came from the Fountain of Inspiration, one who in the still and stainless depths of his inner being, saw that which eye had not seen, and heard that which ear had not heard, a spirit of heavenly mould who took patiently

the cross which was his reward from an unbelieving world, and poured out that blood which became the seed of the world; salvation,— from whose life-giving word sprung a Church, against which the gates of hell have not prevailed,— a Church with those beautiful and hallowed ordinances, which, as symbols and memorials, have cherished the piety of the good for so many ages, and of which, it seems to me, no one who looks at them from the true point of view can speak with disparagement, still less with contempt,— a Church, which has done the greatest work recorded in history for those portions of the globe, where knowledge and refinement have thrown their fairest, broadest light. Now take this train of connected facts, which cluster around the name of Jesus, and say, among all the mediations, of which the world is full, what one shall be mentioned in comparison with this mediation? What name is woven through and through the history of man's redemption into spiritual life, like the name of him who came "to seek and to save that which was lost"?

But, still, for us individually, the question ever returns, how shall this mediation of the Son of God, this blood of the Redeemer, bring us nigh, when we are far-off? And the answer ever is, that the ministry of Jesus can serve us only by kindling the life of God in our souls, only by rousing us from the death-slumbers of sin to a quickening sense of our eternal relations, only by imparting the energy which regenerates and sanctifies, which makes the word of God quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. The truth and the life of a good man, if we will open our hearts to the spirit flowing from them, always do something to bring us nigh unto God,— such is its unquenchable power even in its less perfect

forms. How much more, then, may we expect from the ministry of one, who said with such entire truth,—"my doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me,"—thereby referring the authority of his word to the One Source of all truth! What a saving power shall come from him, whose spirit, wherever it is received, allays the enmity of the depraved will, and preaches peace to them who are afar off and to them who are nigh! Was not Paul right in saying, that by such a one we may "have access by one spirit unto the Father," and that where that corner stone is laid, "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord?" But all this, we are to remember, comes not from traditional faith in names or creeds as such, not from conformity to Christianity as the religious mode of our form of society, but from the living reception of that living truth, which gave to the ministry of Jesus its renewing and redeeming power.

I have exhibited the two sides of the contrast spoken of by Paul, both with reference to the Ephesians of old, and to us of this day. This it is to be far off; and this it is to be made nigh by the ministry and the blood of Jesus. I will only add, if it be indeed a sad and miserable thing to "have no hope," and to be "without God in the world,"—the saddest and most miserable which thought can conceive,—then we should remember what gratitude we owe for that mediation, which is the mightiest agency for redeeming the soul from that state. If by the blessing of God we have been brought nigh to Jesus, let us not again, like the prodigal son, wander into a far off country and famish on husks, while we may, if we will, be fed at our Father's house with that bread of life, which whoso receiveth shall hunger no more.

1st Series. No. 182.

ON

THE NATURE AND PROVINCE

OF

NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

By ORVILLE DEWEY, D.D.

BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
245 Washington Street.

Price 4 Cents.

NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

I AM about to consider religion under two forms, Natural and Revealed. A careful discrimination of the proper nature and distinct province of each, is not only important on its own account, but will help us to understand certain questions that are attracting some attention at the present moment.

I. And, first, let us consider what is the proper nature and what is the distinct province of Natural Religion.

I have intimated that there are questions to be discussed. Indeed, no subject seems to give birth to more, or more agitating questions than religion. This is sometimes brought as an argument against its reality — against its having any foundation in truth. I think it proves the very contrary — proves the natural power and interest which the subject has in the human mind. Nothing but the depth of that interest accounts for the questions. And it *is* deep. Nothing is *so* deep in the human heart as the sense of religion — I do not say the love of it, but the sense of it — the sense of right and wrong — the sense of duty — and the feeling, either for it or against it. The indifference that we hear so much

complained of, is an indifference about technical religion, and not about this deeper, this natural religion of the soul. I will prove it to you from your own experience, and in one single sentence. Nothing in the human bosom was ever sweeter than self-approval; nothing was ever sharper than self-reproach. In the awful depths of human nature these things lie, deep-seated, beneath all else; there they lie, deep-embedded and ineradicable; for God has placed them there. Now the very strength of the feeling, I say, produces diversity of manifestation — diversity of opinion. Let *any* thing — like the political concerns of a country, for instance — become a subject of strong interest, and instantly there springs up boundless dispute. But religion, unlike politics, lies in the depths of the spiritual and unseen nature, and has relations with infinity. All the deeper and vaster it is, all the more various and remarkable are its manifestations. The inly working might, like volcanic energy, heaves from its depths, and flames up in wild fanaticism; or pours itself out in the first glowing, then deadened and indurated and many-folded crust of creeds; and after that, perhaps, comes over all, the cold and deathlike silence of scepticism. But still, all is manifestation of the principle within; whether it be love or hate of religion; whether it be faith or doubt; the Revival or the painful coldness that follows it; the martyr's endurance, or the persecutor's rage. For if a man hates, he hates something; if he doubts, he doubts something. His doubt does not remove, but recognizes that thing. What, then, is that thing? what is that something, to which every thing in our nature bears reference? The answer to this question points to the very depths of natural religion.

It is obvious that we have already, in this preliminary survey of the subject, taken much for granted. But this is not mere assumption. It is granted by our nature — granted by the universal experience — granted by the natural religion of the human heart. Let me sit in judgment upon human nature, as a mere philosopher; let me investigate the bare anatomy of the soul, and with nothing to interest me in the subject but mere curiosity; let the question be, as whether in the body a certain nerve exists or does not exist. So inquiring, what do I find? I do find a moral nerve in the soul. I find that along that nerve feelings live — ay, the strongest feelings that I ever know. And what are they? Feelings of pleasure when I do right, of pain when I do wrong. It is in vain to disguise or deny it. A man may repudiate these convictions; he may laugh if he can, at the conscious pain of wrong doing; but he might as reasonably laugh at the pang he feels, when some nerve in his body is lacerated or cut asunder. There it is, and he cannot help it. There is the pain, and he cannot deny it. He would not be very well pleased, if his physician should come in and look at that lacerated nerve, only to ridicule the whole thing — only to say, it is a mere notion — nothing but fanaticism and fatuity, and not worth minding. And as little, I think, are we required to have pleasure or patience at the levity of him, who pours ridicule upon the great religious convictions of our nature.

Here, then, is the original element of religion; here is natural religion. I have said that we take much for granted. And does not our nature, I repeat, grant much? The delight with which we look upon a noble deed, and the indignation at baseness and wrong; the

sweetness of love and pity, and the pain of anger and envy; the canonization through all the world, of patriotism, of heroism, and of martyred blood, and execration through all the world, of treachery and meanness, and the base desertion of truth and conscience — our nature not only grants, but demands the admission of these things, and would feel itself utterly desecrated without them. And then the inward joy of disinterestedness and purity, and the sting and the crushing shame of a violated conscience — who does not feel that these are revelations from the very depths of his being? And he who should abide ever by these convictions and ever act upon them — would he not be a good and lofty man? And would he, I ask, be a man who could ever look with slight or scorn or indifference upon the natural sanctity of religion?

Nay, there is a direct argument that would lead him from these feelings and sentiments to the very heights of religious conviction. Conscience, I hold, is the revelation of a God. When, with a solemn and stern feeling of justice, I say, "I *deserve* pain and penalty" — my cheek flushed or blanched with shame — my eyes cast upon the ground — that feeling within me looks up — though the eye be sunk in shame — mentally looks up to an authority above me. Perhaps I am speaking now more strongly than the general experience, or than the natural, original experience of the mind, will warrant. I may not say that conscience sees a God as the eye sees a landscape. But this, I say, that the fact of conscience, has for its only logical counterpart, the fact that there is a God.

Let us look at this position a moment. When I descend into the depths of my own heart, I find that this

awful and indescribable sense of desert, is not voluntary, but involuntary. It is not left to me to determine whether I will feel it or not, as it is to determine whether or not I shall stretch out my hand; but feel it I must; and the interposition of a world cannot save me from it. In other words, conscience is a law, not made by me, but set over me. But a law implies a lawgiver; obeying or disobeying implies an authority, somewhere. *Who* then gave that law? If man gave it, man could take it away. But we know that the might and rage combined of the whole world, would not tear that law from the human heart. Misapplied that law may be sometimes, but abrogated it never was and never can be. But if man did not make that law, if all the world did not make it, then there must be a power above man and beyond the world, that made it. Thus the motion of the world itself — of the physical world — is a fact; and nothing will explain it, but an attractive physical force beyond it. And is not this dread motion in the soul, a fact? And can any thing but a moral power beyond it, account for it? Almost may I say that it recognizes that power; that all the world has recognized it, and this, not from any accurate reasonings, but from the inward feeling of an authority, answering to the law within it. And this law exists, not by consent of the world, but in spite of it — in spite of all its vices and crimes. Conscience is not consent. It is most powerful when it is dissent, when it stands alone, when it dwells in the secrecy and silence of the heart. Stand *thou* alone in the world and do the evil deed; or let there be but one other in the world, and do thou the deed of Cain; and it would need no audible voice, saying

"where art thou, Adam?" — or saying, as it said to Cain, "where is thy brother?" — to make you feel that there is a Witness and a Judge above you. Conscience *is*, as it is sometimes called, the voice of God in the soul. No otherwise can we account for its utterance. It is an echo from the sky. It is a feeling, whose counterpart is the belief in a God.

And then, again, all nature addresses this moral conviction in full accord and confirmation. The testimony of nature, indeed, is not all obvious; it lies in the far distant heavens, and in the embosomed secrets of the earth — in the mysteries of vegetable and animal life; and philosophy alone can fully unfold it. Much, indeed, *is obvious*, but much more is not. To the student of nature, however, are opened and unfolded, on every side, infinite depths and wonders of design. If the solid world were one vast piece of mechanism, and we saw it — filled with powers, wheels, levers, and pulleys — all working for the production of streams and trees and flowers and herbage on its surface; or if by some wonder-working power, the mountains were torn from their bases, and sent revolving round the earth, beautiful, beneficent, and never clashing; if all were thus brought near and made thus obvious; if we saw the working beneath us, and heard those spheres above, as they swept their sounding way around us — all would not exhibit such stupendous proofs of design as now fill the surrounding universe. But what is design? It not merely proves — it implies a designer. The one idea is counterpart of the other — is bound up with it, and cannot be separated from it. You might as well talk about a deed without a doer, as about design without a designer.

But I must say something further of the nature of this

conviction. Some persons of late have taken upon them, to repudiate this argument from design — and indeed all *argument* in the case. They say we have an *intuition of God*, or we have no knowledge of him in any way.*

But what now is the province of intuition? How far does it extend? What facts does it embrace? I cannot tell what other men's intuition is, but I will tell you what mine is. I see — that is, I perceive with certainty, what I experience — no more. My intuition embraces the facts of my consciousness — nothing beyond. But my experience is not God. The facts of my consciousness are not God. And therefore to say that I have an immediate intuition of God, is an absolute contradiction of ideas; it is to use language without any intelligible meaning.

This conclusion can be evaded only by setting up a new definition of intuition. If intuition be equivalent to consciousness, it is plain that, strictly speaking, I can be conscious of nothing but what passes within me. If intuition refers to what is self-evident or certain, we are brought to the same conclusion. For nothing is certain to me, nothing is self-evident, but what I perceive, feel, know in myself. The "first truths" as they are called — that is to say, the axioms, whether of Morals, or of the

* I do not know how distinctly this position has been taken in the discussions of the day. Certainly the argument from design is rejected by some, and, I think, *all* argument; and the only conceivable alternative to my mind, is to say that the being of a God is *intuitively* seen. Many indeed say that their belief in God did not come from any argument, and this very truly; for it came, doubtless, from education. But the question is, what is the proper philosophical basis of this truth?

Mathematics, are of this character. That benevolence is right; that two and two make four; that the whole is more than a part — these axioms are nothing but descriptions of the state of my own mind. And by this circle — that is, by the circle of my experience, to *my* apprehension, all absolute certainty is bounded.

I have indeed the fullest belief in things out of this circle. I have the fullest belief in the being of a God. But I cannot say that I have an intuition of God. The truth that he is, is not given me by consciousness. nor is it any way a self-evident truth. The being of a God is correlative to my consciousness, is implied by my consciousness, but it is surely no part of my consciousness.

In short, between my intuition and the being of a God, there is a step of evidence. What I perceive in myself, what I see around me too, evinces by the plainest reasoning the existence of a moral and intelligent Creator. This old way of proceeding, this process of reasoning, is held by some to be quite unsatisfactory. They say it proves that there is a Creator of this world, but it does not prove that he is God: this Creator may have been himself created. Grant it for argument's sake. Then this chain of causes must at length bring us to the Supreme Cause. But this hypercriticism does not disturb me. The Being who made me and made the world, to *me* is God. The rejectors of this way of reasoning, of the logical method, call it logic-grinding, and material philosophy, and I know not what; and claim to be in possession of a more spiritual philosophy. If they had said of a more mystical, I must think they would have adopted a more appropriate word. For in truth, they ought to maintain, as I conceive, that they have discovered a new faculty in the mind

— unknown to all former philosophy: and that is a faculty which takes as certain a cognizance of things without the mind, as consciousness takes of things in the mind. Intuitive seeing with them, instead of being confined within the modest bounds assigned to it by all former philosophy, penetrates through the universe and reaches the Supreme Cause, at a glance.

But not to dwell upon these novel speculations and discoveries — is not the whole history of the human mind on this subject — the history, that is to say, of philosophy, of theology, of Theism — on our side in this matter. If the being of a God is a self-evident truth, why has there been any attempt to prove it? How, upon this hypothesis, is Atheism possible? Yet it is possible, and many books have been written to refute it. How would this be, if the truth in question were a matter of intuition and of certainty! Were any books ever written — was ever a word written to prove the mathematical or the moral axioms? No, there have been scholastic questions, as to whether they are innate or not, but their real existence in the human mind, has never been doubted. Has Theism stood before the world in this light — so that a book or an argument to prove it, would have been thought ridiculous? Surely not. The point is susceptible of doubt; therefore not self-evident. And I am confident that if you put the question to the bosom of the loftiest transcendental philosopher, he will say that he wishes he were more certain of this truth than he is.

I admit, and certainly I do it with no reluctance, but with the highest joy and gratitude, that it is a truth which comes the nearest possible to certainty. I want no formal array of proofs, no nice metaphysical arguments, and

I freely consent to *their* banishment from philosophy. Conscience in me *refers* to a lawgiver; design around me *implies* a Designer, even as action implies an actor. This to me, though not, strictly speaking, philosophical certainty, is overwhelming, all-satisfying evidence.

II. Let us now proceed to consider the subject of revealed religion.

And here, there are two classes of views to be considered; first, the views of those who seem to us to mistake or to deny its distinctive character, and secondly, of those who, on account of the errors which have been engrafted upon it, reject it altogether. The first belongs to the great German School of Naturalism; which has found a few disciples among ourselves; the second, to avowed infidelity.

In entering upon a brief examination of the first ground, it is important to state in the outset what we understand by revealed religion. Confining our views to Christianity, then, as the point of chief interest — we do not say, in the first place, that every word in the record was suggested by an unerring inspiration, or that any word was. Meaning now by inspiration, not an *afflatus*, nor a poetic enthusiasm, no mental vigor, nor any other vague thing which it is fashionable of late with a few writers to call inspiration — but meaning a special guidance from above, we do not conceive that it extended to words at all. In the second place, we do not mean that every *idea* set down in the New Testament, or uttered by our Saviour, was revealed. That God exists, that he is a good being, that we ought to be good, that rectitude consists in love, pity, piety — these things could not be revealed; because they belong, as we have shown, to the natural, primal re-

ligion of the human heart. "Thou shalt love God — thou shalt love thy neighbor;" — these things men had known always. In the third place, we do not mean, that all the most *vitally important* truths in the Christian record, were revealed. The two precepts just mentioned, Jesus declares to be the spiritual substance of religion; and certainly they were not revealed. What was communicated, I hold, was supplementary to what was known — the supernatural was subsidiary to the natural; and the known and natural was more important than the supplementary and supernatural. The truth already in the human heart was more important than any miracles could be. And the reason is plain and irrefragable. It is not only that this truth involved the very substance of goodness and happiness; but that without it, no communication from above could have been understood.

And all this being true, to what purpose is it triumphantly to ask, whether inspiration or miracle or the authority of Christ, is necessary to establish these ground truths of all natural religion? Nothing of the kind is pretended — can be pretended. For the Christian teachers themselves always take these things for granted. And on the other hand, what greater mistake can there be, than to confound the Christian dispensation, the Christian peculiarity, whatever it be, with this presupposed truth — this truth presupposed by the system itself? — this basis on which it builds? It is as if a man should say that the whole peculiar significance and beauty of St. Peter's church or of York Minster lay in the Grecian or the Gothic arch; or that in the axiom — "things equal to the same thing are equal to one another" — consisted the whole peculiarity and merit of Euclid's Elements; or that

any one or two metaphysical or moral axioms, universally admitted, embodied the whole power and charm of each system of mental or moral philosophy that has been builded upon them.

No, the question is — upon the great basis truths of all religion, upon the permanent, indisputable, universal, eternal truths of natural religion, what did Jesus build, and how did he build? Did he build as Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca did — by the unaided force of natural reason — or was there some peculiar mark and signature of the divine hand upon him? In short, was there divine interposition — was there miracle in his system?

And here let it be observed, that if the system was any thing more than natural religion, it must have involved miracle. Natural religion is a collection of truths developed by our nature or gathered from an observation of the surrounding universe; it is simply an induction from all the known general laws of the spiritual and material creation. Now if more was to be communicated it *must* have been by other means — by means out of the range of general laws — that is, by departure from those laws — in other words, by miracle. The supplement itself must have been miraculous. Or, if there were no additional truth revealed, yet if any new and specific sanction were to be given to old truth, that must have been miraculous. Thus the idea of immortality was not new; the human mind had exhausted itself to attain conviction on this momentous point. Now, if it had pleased God to lend some positive assurance to human hope, some distinct additional evidence to the teachings of nature and of the mind, it would be done only by miracle.

Who will venture to say that it might not have pleased

the Creator, to do this, or that it was not possible for him to do it. Admitting, then, that it might be done, and perceiving, as I think all must perceive, that a revelation could be made *only* by miracle; let us now look into the New Testament and see what is there. Is not miracle spread over it, interwoven with it, everywhere? I confess that I cannot reason at length a matter so very plain. There lies the book! If any man can tear miracle from the face of it, without mutilation and destruction of the whole record — without making the book ridiculous, the writers of it impostors, and the religion a foolish legend, he must possess an ingenuity which, I think, has never yet been brought to bear upon the subject. Miracle is there, clear and indisputable — veritable miracle — open and public — often repeated — often distinctly appealed to by our Saviour in support of his claims — constantly attested by eye-witnesses and by the very eye-witnesses on whose fidelity and sobriety our faith in the religion reposes — and I repeat it, inextricably interwoven with the very texture of the narrative, with the entire fabric of the system.

Something that is *called* miracle, it must be admitted, at the least, is found in the New Testament. What is it? Certainly, it is something very wonderful; to all appearance it touches the very order of nature; so it strikes the minds of the astonished beholders; and they say, "since the world was, it hath not been heard that any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind," and "we know that thou art a teacher come from God; because no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him;" and our Saviour does not reject this conclusion but admits it as true. What, then, I say again, is

this thing that is done? And I must confess that I know not what to think of the state of that mind which, professing to receive the religion, can say that the conclusion was all a mistake; that the thing done was a miracle only to the ignorance of the people; that there was no departure from the order of nature; that the sick were healed, and the dead raised, by the vitality of some powers of which we are ignorant; that the reality of a miracle cannot be admitted. This way of thinking, in one who professes to reverence Christianity and its Founder, is to me utterly incomprehensible. It would drive me further from all religion, from all faith. If such things can be permitted, if such delusions can be effected under the government of God, I should distrust the very evidence of natural religion. If I did not believe in the miracles with *my* view of the matter — I should not only be no Christian, but in a fair way to be no religionist of any sort.

But once more, and in fine, if these are admitted to be veritable miracles, to be what they profess to be, then I cannot understand how they should be lightly regarded; how their importance should be decried or diminished or spoken of with indifference or scorn. What if natural religion *can* stand without them? What if they do *not* prove that we ought to love God or to love one another? What if they address, and therefore presuppose, as most certainly they do, a natural reverence and religion in the human heart? Is it nothing that such a communication is made? — a miraculous communication, or a communication sealed by miracles? Is it any thing less than a most amazing and delightful fact? Suppose that miracle added nothing to natural religion in any way — noth-

ing either of light or of confirmation; suppose that it was merely a seal which it had pleased the Almighty Being to set upon the excellence of Jesus Christ and the importance of his teachings; would it not be unspeakably precious? A voice from the infinite silence! — an interposition, breaking through the staid uniformity of nature, to express the paternal interest which heaven takes in our welfare! — what could be more interesting?

Nay, it is precisely the manifestation that the cultivated mind of the world needs, and for which, in fact, it was reserved. It is often referred, I know, for its proper sphere to dark and ignorant times. But I deny that position. I maintain that miracle is especially needed by enlightened ages. Among rude savage tribes there has always been a sufficient disposition to believe in unseen powers, and to invest them with personality. But as nations emerge from barbarism, a contrary tendency often manifests itself. Speculations, philosophies, falsely so called, come in — subtile questionings about the nature of God — vague, mystic, pantheistic dreamings — doubts about the care and watch of Providence — principles that sap the foundations of all public and private virtue and happiness. This was very much the character of all Grecian and Roman refinement, when Christ appeared. Something of this has been breaking out from time to time ever since — marking periods of rash speculation and immature thought — and it was likely, in particular, to reveal itself in the first outburst of a nation's literature, like that of Germany. There was, therefore, special need of a miraculous manifestation in the time of Christ; and I shall venture to add, that German Naturalism stands in the same need now, of the very faith which it denies. The very state of the

German mind in this respect is an argument with me, for the miraculous element in the Christian system. Nor, is this necessity for interposition, a mere imagination of my own. Wise men have often declared themselves predisposed and quite ready to believe, for instance, in the reappearance of the dead, or in any positive manifestations from the unseen world, because they have thought that something like this was necessary to break in upon the all-imprisoning materialism of society. But this very office is performed for the world, once for all, by the miracles of Christianity. They have spread, through all the Christian times, a sense of God's paternal interest in his creatures, and of "the powers of the world to come;" they have struck the heart of the world, even as did the miraculous rod of old, the barren rock; and living waters have flowed and living verdure has spread its beauty over the track of ages; whereas, had religion been left in the hands of the Grecian philosophy, I am persuaded it would have died away into vague and unfruitful abstractions, and the wastes of death would have overspread the intervening centuries; and we now had been comparatively "without hope and without God in the world." Let me not be told that there had still been left without the miracles, the purity of the Gospel, and the loveliness of the Christ, to touch the heart. They would have been disputable the moment they came into contact with actual life; they would have been doubtful, the moment they touched upon the questions — what regard and relation has God to us? — and what has he in reserve for us hereafter, or whether he has any thing in reserve? — they would have had no zeal nor sanction, but an opinion; they would have been subject to every man's construction of

their propriety and utility; one would have thought the Christ too sad; another, too strict; another, too limited and Jewish; and all this purity of the Gospel and this loveliness of the Christ, and all the admiration for them, would have dwindled and faded away as it often has done, into vague reveries and fine sentiments. It would have been like the admiration of Rousseau — compatible with utter infidelity and unquestionable vices. There are words of Christ, concerning selfishness, concerning pride, concerning revenge, concerning marriage and the general relation of the sexes, which must *not* be taken for any thing less than words of authority; which *must not be subject to any revision;* if they are, the very strength — the very bone and muscle, if I may speak so — the very heart of the system is gone!

I know it is often said, "what great harm is there about this system of Naturalism? There are many beautiful things in it. What great harm is there in rejecting the miracles? The substance of Gospel truth and love is left. What need is there of looking so very seriously upon a man — though he does assail your faith in a divine interposition?"

I judge no man's heart; but I will tell you the state of my own. Very seriously I must look at this question, at any rate. For I feel deep in my heart and whole being, the need of such a faith; I must confess that the teaching of nature is too general to satisfy the wants of my mind; and that the revealings of my mind, again, are too doubtful and defective for the needed reliance. I am ignorant, I am weak; I am sinful; I am struggling with many difficulties; the conflict is hard — it seems too hard for me at times; and nature around me, moves on, mean-

while, in calm uniformity as if it did not mind me, and as if its Author did not regard the dread warfare that is going on within me. The universe lies around me, like a bright sea of boundless fluctuations — studded with starry isles indeed, but swept by clouds of obscurity — and whither it is tending and where it is bearing me, I know not. I feel at times as if I were wrapped with an infinite envelopment of mystery; and I ask, with almost heart-breaking desire, for some voice to come forth from the great realm of silence, and speak to me. I say, "Oh! that the great Being who made the universe, would for once touch, as no hand but his can touch, the *springs* of this all-encompassing mysterious ORDER, and say to me, in the sublime pause — in the cleft of these dread mountain heights of the universe — say to me, I love thee; I will care for thee; I will save thee; I will bear thee beyond the world-barrier, the rent vail of death and the sealed tomb, away, away — to blessed regions, on high — there to live for ever!"

It has COME! — to my faith, that very word has come, in the mission of Christ. I will say no more. I will not mock conviction with arguments to prove the value of such an interposition. I will only say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away!"

We have undertaken in the foregoing pages to set forth the character and define the boundaries respectively, of Natural and Revealed Religion. The rejection of the

miracles, the rejection of every thing supernatural in religion, clearly places a man on the first ground. I am not anxious to determine by what name he shall be called; whether or not he shall be called a Christian. I am more concerned, for my own sake, to understand the principle of the thing. If any one holds that Jesus Christ has communicated nothing but what was already known by intuition or consciousness; if he maintains also that Christ has added no sanction to religious truth or virtue, but that which every good man's life lends to it; then, certainly, in his system, the phrase, Revealed Religion, is a phrase without meaning. He may say, indeed, and I suppose he will say, that Christianity is *not* a revealed religion; that there is nothing supernatural in it or about it; that such at least, is *his* construction of the system; and that standing upon this ground he has the best possible right to be called a Christian. Again I say, that I care not to dispute about names; but certainly this constructionist must see, that he stands upon the ground of natural religion. He holds indeed that Christianity itself is nothing but a system of natural religion.

The question on this point, I have attempted, under the head of revealed religion, briefly to discuss. I have contended for miraculous interposition, as the professed and manifest peculiarity of the Christian religion — not the whole and entire substance of it, but the peculiarity of it. I have maintained that there is here, a manifestation from God, which cannot be explained by any known facts of nature or humanity; that from beyond the reach of the known and visible — from the infinite bosom of mystery, a hand hath been stretched forth, and hath written characters on the great chart of the world; and that of these

characters Christianity is the sublime rescript and the everliving witness.

But this very discussion brings in another kind of question about Christianity, and that is, in one form, the infidel's question. "Here you are — you professed Christians" — he may say — "not yet agreed as to what Christianity is. Is this then a *revealed* Religion? Besides" — he might say — looking at the actual state of the religion in the world — "I am dissatisfied with the system, every way. Such controversies about it, ever since it came into the world; such disputings and warrings of sects; such monstrous tenets of faith, defying all reason, and demanding its denial in order to their reception; such extravagance and fanaticism on every hand; — how can I take any interest in a religion like this?" To a part of this objection I have replied already. Was any great and intensely interesting subject ever agitated in the world, without producing in a greater or less degree, the same results?

But now I have another observation to make. Was any great truth or mass of truth ever thrown into the world, that had not to struggle with error — that in the conflict, error did not mix with it, and that it was not obliged to clear itself, through processes that took time, and implied progress? Has it not been so with every political, every scientific, metaphysical, and moral principle? What, let me ask, are you thinking of the human mind, when you imagine it the passive wax, to receive the perfect seal of truth? Nothing less than the absolute inspiration of all churches and all ages could have kept them free from all error; and nothing but miracle could have delivered them from the great conditions of progress. It

has ever pleased the imagination of men, I know, to dream of a primeval golden age of the world; and in the same manner to dream of a primitive golden age of the Church. But I believe in neither. The primitive churches, from the moment when the sacred mission was ended, construed the doctrine according to their light, and without a miracle, must have done so. And their light was small. You have only to read the history of those churches or the books of their clergy, to know it. Such extravagances, dreamings, fooleries, are there in the writings of many of the early fathers, that if any man were to publish the same things now, he would be thought fitter for a madhouse than a chair of instruction. What I say is, that Christian truth took the fate of all truth. It must have done so, without a miracle; and I do not know, that anybody pretends that there was any miracle wrought to prevent it. And what was that fate — what the natural course of things? Why, that all the prevalent speculations and philosophies of the day, should rush in, and mix themselves up with it. Platonism gave it a Trinity; the prevailing fatalism, a decree of election and reprobation; Manichæism, a doctrine of total depravity; and Judaism and Paganism together, the popular dogma of the atonement. Not that I deny that there is some truth to be held in all these forms of error. There is a truth in that primitive, baptismal creed — of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. There is an eternal counsel of God to be believed in, and a deep depravity of man and a redeeming work of Christ. What I say is, that error naturally mixed itself up with all this truth, and that the truth has ever since been passing through a slow process of purgation. If this is not admitted, what, I pray, is meant by the progress of the

world? What is meant by a boasted Reformation? What by a Reformed Dutch Church, and a Seceder's Church of Scotland, and a Protestant Church of England, and by all the forms of dissent from them? But it *is* admitted by every intelligent member of each of these Churches. Certainly *all* Christians admit it. The very history, at least, of all the Protestant churches is a full admission of it. It was natural, then, it was unavoidable, that the Christian system should be disfigured. It is a fact; it is admitted to be a fact. There has no more been an interposition to save this truth, than any other truth from perversion. It did not consist with the wisdom of Divine Providence so to interpose. You might as justly single out one river, and say that while all others had been tinged by the soils and ores they had flowed through, *this* has remained as untouched and pure as the fountain from which it sprung. It would be a miraculous river certainly; and nobody claims such preservation for Christianity.

Thus, then, I think *is* revealed religion to be received — with a fair and fearless question as to what it is — with a care to distinguish between the disfigurement of the system, and the true form. I am not urging upon any man my own construction; though I value it more than life. And when it is well known, that Locke and Newton and Milton held this construction, besides many able men in England; that the leading persons in the Reformed French Churches in Paris; that the largest portion of the German clergy, the most learned in the world, doubtless, though exhibiting some extravagances — from which however many are returning; that more than a thousand churches of simple and unlearned Christians in this coun-

try, commonly called *Christians* — to say nothing of our own smaller body of avowed Unitarians — have adopted the same view of Christianity, I think I may, with no want of modesty, say that it is entitled to some consideration. But I am not now urging my own construction. I am rather urging that every man should have his own independent construction, so far as he is qualified to form an opinion; that he should see at least that this *is* a matter to be construed — a matter for investigation — and that he is not to take Christianity, just as it may anywhere chance to be offered to him in a mass, and to say this is too monstrous for belief. Thus summarily to reject or to disparage Christianity is, in the circumstances, a folly which nobody would ever think of committing on any other subject. Reason itself has been as much abused as religion.

When I hear a man say that there are so many opinions about Christianity that he cannot believe any of them, or more particularly, that Moses told a great many strange stories, or that he cannot believe half of what Paul said, I think that a life of study on these subjects warrants me in saying, that I wish he better understood them. You see, I trust, that with me, this is no sectarian feeling. Nay, it is something far deeper. When I perceive the inexpressible value of a revealed religion; when I look at the Old Testament, and see that it is the most majestic book of all antiquity; when I look into the New, and see there a doctrine and example, a life and death such as the world never saw elsewhere — see the hand of God opening the gate of hope and of heaven to sinful and suffering man; it fills me with concern and pain, to think that some overspreading, earthly clouds, should hide all this wonder

from any human eye. For this I know, that whatever a man may believe about the Gospel, unless he takes the spirit of it into his heart, he is a miserable man for time and eternity — miserable so long as he refuses it, be that period, time or eternity.

1st Series. No. 183.

ON

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

By ORVILLE DEWEY, D. D.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

OCTOBER, 1842.

Price 3 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, 2 SCHOOL STREET.

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

The third topic which I had in contemplation is, Experimental Religion.

If a man has no time to investigate the doctrinal questions that have arisen with regard to Christianity — then let him do, what he can do — let him imbibe the spirit of Christ, and follow his example. Let him do this, and though he were an infidel, he will ere long become a believer. Let him thus test the doctrine and he shall find it to be true. It is a principle in modern philosophy that if you would know a system, you must for a time as it were embrace it — you must enter into it, and be imbued with it, all over. Let Christianity be put to this test, and I fear not for the result. Let a man put on this garment and he never will put it off.

What, then, is this adoption of the spirit of Christianity? What is vital, experimental religion? Jesus Christ speaks many words of wisdom and truth, and not a few that seem to appeal to the very depths of experience — to the inmost condition of every human heart. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Laboring, heavy laden, are all men;

heavy-laden, not only with cares and anxieties and sorrows, but with the burden of sin, and with the burden, too, of a conscious and infinite need. And *rest* for man! — is there such a thing? Rest for the laboring and struggling spirit in his bosom — *may* it come *here?* Oh! dreaming fancy of rest in the bowers of heaven or on the bosom of a cloud — rest may be there; but can it be any where else? Can it be *here?* And the solemn teacher says, "it is; come unto me, and I will give it to you." And again, he says, "he that drinks of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst." Thirst! — how significant that word! How many a heart — I am speaking of no fine sentiment now, but of sad, stern reality; nor of any poor or humble man's need, but of the rich and great man's need as much — how many a heart is parched and fevered and panting with thirst after happiness! Is there any fountain that can quench that painful thirst? And there is one that says, "drink of the water that I will give, and thou shalt thirst no more." And again he speaks of one who had wandered, hungering, in a land of exile, and who says, "how many hired servants of my father have enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father; and will say, father I have sinned." And he went, and "his father saw him a great way off," and met him, and bedewed with tears his returning child. Is it all figure — beautiful indeed, but only figure? To multitudes it is no more. Few men or none, are so pure and good as to have experienced the full reality. It is figure; but with infinite depths of meaning. How else but in figure, *could* the Saviour speak to a sinful and sensual people? For this

cause he *says*, that he spake in parables. And these parables are yet waiting for the light of other ages to clear them up. These figures, the depths of eternity only will fully open and unfold and disclose. This is no extravagance, at least with me. A fanatic if I seem to any one, yet certainly I was never more in earnest.

Let me then attempt to show you what I mean — darkly to show you what I think, is the meaning of these stupendous teachings. Let me suppose then that I could send any one of you from this house to-night, and that the moment he touched yonder threshold, a change should pass over him such as our Saviour required — that he should then and there become a perfectly regenerated man; that all the burthens of raging passion, unholy desire, and of low, mean aims, should fall from him like a garment, and that he should be clothed anew with angelic purity and joy; that the exhausted fountains of his soul should be filled with the flooding life and light of heaven; and in fine — to specify only one distinct affection — that all hatred, envy, jealousy, and selfishness departing from him, his mind should be filled with one absorbing emotion of disinterested love — love to God, and love to men. What then would follow? Call it a miracle; but admit that the miracle were wrought. What then would follow? He would step forth into a new world. The heavens and the earth would wear a new aspect, and one brighter than the visual ray ever kindled. An ocean of goodness would be flowing around him; and infinite love would enkindle in him boundless joy. Man would be dear to his love, and to his very patience. He would have contests with him; but he would sustain them with magnanimity, candor, and gentleness. Temptations and sorrows would

assail him; but seeing the love and the loving purpose of God in them all, he would meet them with faith, courage and cheerfulness. Good thoughts would come fast as the moments came, and kind affections frequent as occasions called; and when nothing abroad demanded thought or affection, they would retire to the sanctuary of humility and prayer within.

Is it said that this would be a miracle? Let me remind you, however, that even love in the ordinary sense — that which commonly bears this name — often works a miracle, very like to this. But I grant that this spiritual work, done in a moment, would be a miracle. Yet done in the long experience of life, it is not a miracle, but the very thing that fulfils and interprets the teachings of the Gospel. Done effectually it would be that very satisfying of the soul's hunger, and quenching of its thirst, and relief of its burthens, of which our Saviour speaks. For the Gospel offers no mysterious device for finding rest. Rest is to be found only in the moral and spiritual affections which it inculcates.

But how is this thing to be done — this regeneration to be effected? All original power is God's — all the spiritual powers within us, are his; and the special grace that is offered to help our endeavor, is his. Therefore, in an important sense, the work of our conversion is God's work. But the work, as *done by us*, is to be done by attention and effort, by meditation, by prayer, by watching, and striving, by spiritual care and self-culture; and this, during the whole of life. It is not to be done in a moment, but in a life. Some hearer may turn away from this, with that language of old upon his lips, "this is a hard saying — who can hear it?" "We know an

easier way" — he may say. And he may go to some conference, or conventicle or church, where he may be told that all the work — all that makes the difference between misery and happiness, between hell and heaven — may be done in a moment. I will not gainsay his experience; suppose that something is done; What is done? I answer, that he has *begun* the work — begun it in unusual circumstances perhaps — in a revival as it is called — in circumstances fitted beyond all others *he* may think to move him to the undertaking. Still he has only begun. It is impossible that in one moment, he should have done more. If he thinks he has done all on which happiness and heaven depend, in one moment, he is fatally deceived. If in one moment he has only *begun* the work, then life lies before him for its accomplishment. And what is done there, let me still say, is what may be just as well done here, in this hour of calm meditation. Would that it were done. And I trust that it is done in such hours as these.

"Nay, but" — some one may say — and if you, my brethren, will excuse the freedom, *I* will meet the objection — for the objection is not personal but applies to a class — "nay, but you are not the preachers to do it. Your preaching is too rational to work up to the necessary conviction and distress; you do not alarm them enough to set them to work; you may interest your hearers, but you will never convert them." God forbid that this should be true! *Is* it so, my friends? *Must* it needs be so? When I tell you and show you that on an inward, regenerating, purifying work in your souls, all your welfare — Oh! an infinite welfare, depends; are there no secret resolves, no solemn purposes, no humble prayers, in your hearts? Are there no beginnings nor goings on of this

great work in you? In those vast and vital concerns of religion, that go down to the foundations of your welfare, that touch the silent depths of your being, must there be a noise and a tumult and an agitating occasion and a visible sympathy — things upon the surface — to stir those depths within you? God forbid that this should be true!

But I must look a little more seriously and deliberately at this objection. It is an objection, however inapplicable, which is too often made to be passed over without some formal notice. It is the objection of late, I think, most in vogue — for the doctrinal questions seem to have passed by. It is constantly said, you know, of the religion preached in our churches that it is cold and superficial; that it is no religion for a dying hour — no religion for the poor — no religion for human nature; that there is no regenerating, soul-saving power in it.

Now it may be well for us to consider — in order that we may do no injustice to this charge, however unjust the charge be — that an objection common as this, probably has some foundation either in facts or in appearances. I conceive that it has none in facts. What then are the appearances that lend it countenance? I know of none but this. The language of our discourses differs somewhat from the ordinary language of the pulpit. We do not use the technical phraseology by which religion has been long set forth, so much as others. Instead of "grace," we often say, sanctity, purity, virtue; instead of "godliness," goodness, devotion; instead of "change of heart," becoming a good and pious man. The inference is, that our discourse wants the true and great meaning of the pulpit. This I utterly deny. I admit, at the same time, and really think, that we may err in this matter of

language; that if we used — not more of the technical language — I do not admit that we err in this — but that if we used more of the plain, homely, Saxon, Bible words, it would be better. We preach, however, to people who understand the educated language of the time — the language of popular literature — and in this, we naturally frame our thoughts. But that in our thought and in our heart, we mean to preach and do preach, a vital, a life-giving, a soul-saving Christianity, I know, I feel to be true; and nothing can shake this assurance. It is said that we do not preach Christ; but I appeal to you with confidence, that no theme is oftener or more earnestly set forth in this pulpit, than Christ the suffering, Christ the crucified. But then, it is said, that we preach so much upon life, and the plain, every-day duties of life — talk so much about honesty and integrity and kindness and pity and candor, and the spiritual meaning and interest of life, and about the ministration of all its events to the same end, that it is no preaching and no religion. The very kernel of the Gospel, it is said, is ground down into miserable details about being upright and good, and its very essence is chilled and frozen into "a cold clatter about mo ality."

Is it a *christian* objector that says this? Or did he come from the shrine of pagan mysteries or from the school of Jewish mystics and ascetics? What more remarkably characterized the teaching of Jesus Christ, than his very direct appeal to the very situations in which his hearers stood, to the circumstances and events of their time and condition, to the duties and exposures of their daily life; and thus I may add, to the virtues and perils of all human life? The most formal and extended dis-

courses of his, are the sermon on the Mount, and that recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew, stating in the form of a solemn judgment the terms and conditions of acceptance with him. Read those discourses, and tell me upon what they treat. The topics of the first are, poverty of spirit, sorrowing, meekness, the desire of purity, pity, peaceableness, patient suffering; of the second, giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and hospitality to the stranger — clothing to the naked, visiting the sick, comforting the prisoner.

These then are qualities of true experimental religion; and this, not by construction, not by inference only; they held a place and a large place in the express, formal, and solemn teaching of the great Master. These are not all indeed; for he also spake of love to God, and of faith in his own interposing help, and of penitence to be felt, and forgiveness to be sought after, and of heaven to be gained.

But again; let us look at the reason of the thing. We have been speaking of natural and revealed religion. Does the latter found itself upon the former, or does it not? Does revealed religion recognize as just, our natural sense of rectitude, or does it not? To be more specific — when the Bible uses the words — good, holy, righteous, upright — does it mean by them what the natural human conscience understands, or does it mean something else? If it does mean that, then our teaching is right. If it does not mean that, then what does it mean? Some mystic secret, some dark insignia, does it propose to shadow forth, as the very condition of salvation! Then of what dreadful and fatal misleading is the Bible guilty! It tells us to be good, pure, just, righteous —

gentle, compassionate, disinterested, holy — lovers of men — lovers of God; it takes these very words that were in our mouths, and gives not a hint that it uses them in any new or mysterious sense; and yet here comes a theological casuist who says that all this is no religion; that the preaching of all this, is no preaching; that nobody is to be converted with such teaching, no matter how thorough and earnest it be; that true, vital, saving godliness is altogether a different thing.

My friends, this, to me, is the most deplorable distortion of Christianity, to which it has every been subjected. There have been theological errors, I know, many and dark, but they are all nothing to this — this tying up of religion into a little knot of mystery, instead of contemplating it as the all-pervading light of heaven — streaming through the creation — infolding and beautifying the universe. To my thought, it divests religion of all its charm, its grandeur, its universality, its all pervading influence.

Nor think, my Brethren, this construction of the Gospel, is one of any great extent or authority in the Christian church. It is unknown to the theology of the good old English time; it is unknown to the theology of most countries — Catholic and Protestant. It is peculiarly an American error. Our religion in this country, it is to be remembered, began in dissent and was consolidated in metaphysics. Nowhere else in the world, has the pulpit been so metaphysical as in this country. And nowhere else in Christendom, has religion shot up into the growth of such a monstrous enigma, instead of being cultivated as a clear, intelligible and useful principle.

This is the true religion — an intelligible love, purity, uprightness, humility, devotion. This is the true religion,

and to experience this, rationally, earnestly, daily, instantly, is to experience true religion.

The importance, the intelligible, the heartfelt, the infinite importance of this — how shall I ever set forth? Yet it is after this that I am ever striving, however humbly — the awakening and guiding of a strong, constant and soul-renewing interest in the supreme and everlasting concerns of religion. And why? Because, with all gravity, with all rational conviction, I feel and know, that these are the greatest and weightiest concerns of every man's being. This is no fanaticism; it is simple truth. This is not to be acceded to, because it is the preacher's *way*. This is not pulpit truth, but heart truth. The interest of property — the interest of an empire, shall be discussed in courts and senates, and they shall be discussed with earnestness and eloquence. But here is a greater theme — man's own, inmost, enduring, everlasting welfare. Life shall pass away — empires shall pass away; and then, and thenceforward, and forever, shall that welfare stand in nothing but pure, regenerate sanctity and virtue. Nay, yet nearer must we bring the conviction; for this is true *now*. There is not a bad man here, but so far as his badness goes, he is a miserable man for it. And there is not a good man here, but so far as his goodness goes, he is a happy man for it. That great moral bond — that dread, and I will say, that glorious bond — God Almighty has laid upon every human soul, and that bond never was, is, nor shall be, broken. Is this a mere matter of fanatic folly? Is experimental religion a dream or a fancy? The question here is *not* about entering into one or another fanatical form of religion; not about a zeal for one creed and ritual or another; but it is about

that making of the heart pure and the life pure, without which there is no real good nor true joy, in this world nor another, in time nor in eternity. Experimental religion, a dream and a phantasm! Show me then that conscience is a dream, that the revelation and the authority of God in that conscience, are phantasies, and that the eternal laws of right and wrong, of weal and woe, which are set in our nature, and writ in the Bible, are visions and imaginations! No, these are not dreams, but the all-comprehending realities of our being. Heaven and earth may pass away; but not one jot or one tittle of this truth shall pass, till it all be fulfilled within us.

This then, is the supreme good; and there is no other like it. It is a good heart. It is a pure, penitent, humble, regenerate heart. There is nothing on earth that is worth striving for with any comparative anxiety. If the option were offered to any man, to go home this night and pray for a mountain of gold, and to receive it; or to pray for a pure heart and to receive it; — if he did not pray for the latter, his folly would be unutterable; it would be the wonder of angels. Wanting every thing else, with this, he would be happy; having every thing else, without this, he would be miserable. What shall it profit a man — saith the solemn teacher — what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!

Susan C. Boyd

1st Series. No. 184.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE

CENTRAL PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIANITY,

AND

THE TRUE BASIS

OF THE

UNITARIAN DENOMINATION.

By Rev. EZRA S. GANNETT.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

November, 1842.

Price 4 Cents.

NOTICE.

THIS tract was delivered as a discourse before the Convention which met at Worcester, Mass., October 18, 1842. It is now printed at the request of the Worcester Association. These facts are stated, to explain the form in which it appears and one or two allusions in the course of the sermon, it having seemed best to retain the form of address in which it was originally prepared.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, 2 SCHOOL STREET.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE

CENTRAL PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIANITY.

MATTHEW, V. 6.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

THE writings of the New Testament are distinguished by a comprehensiveness of expression which, I apprehend, will be found to be one of the highest qualities of style. I know not how to describe this excellence in the terms of rhetorical art; but it can have escaped the notice of few readers of the Bible. It would not be right to call it a condensation of thought, for this, usually at least, implies an absence of that simplicity which is essential to a book intended to have general circulation among the people, and such a book is the Bible. Neither would it be doing justice either to the sacred writings or to their authors, to resolve this quality into a happy choice of words, for such selection of language supposes a study of mere rhetorical effect, which was far below the aim or

the thought of those who composed the records of Christianity. Still I can no better explain what I have in mind than by representing it as the union of singular brevity and clearness of expression with the largest extent of thought, so that a few words open to view a vast field of truth, so that a short sentence will not only be suggestive, but sufficiently instructive in respect to the broadest and deepest questions which man can raise; and I cannot cite a stronger example of this peculiarity of style than the passage which I have just repeated from the Evangelist. "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

If we consider but for a moment the import of this declaration, inscribed on the pages of the everlasting Gospel as it fell from the lips of the great Teacher of mankind, we shall perceive that it answers those two great inquiries which in all ages have occupied the attention alike of the speculative and of the practical, — what is the chief good, and how may it be attained. What should be the highest object of human desire, and how shall the desire, when directed to its proper object, be converted into possession? These are the questions on which ethical science has labored, and to which the toilworn lives of successive generations have endeavored to discover the reply. The doubt in which they have been involved, the difficulty that had seemed insurmountable, vanish before the words of Christ. "Blessed" — ah! that was the word which touched the problem that humanity was anxious to solve; for it was not the Jew alone, but man, — suffering, struggling, dying, yet curious, impatient, hopeful man, that longed to know, more than all things else, who were the blessed — the happy. "Blessed are they who do hunger

and thirst after righteousness." What! happy they who are conscious of a want that preys upon them like hunger upon a starving man, like thirst upon one whose lips are parched? Yes; "for they shall be filled." They shall get what they desire, and it shall satisfy them, — they shall get it, and they can get nothing better. This is the great good; this the loftiest height to which human desires can climb, the amplest blessing which Divine love can bestow. How strangely must this language have fallen on the ears of thousands who were listening with eager curiosity, and who had all their lives thought of righteousness only as the means to something better. It was as if to one who had devoted his days and nights to study for the sake of the fame or the emolument he might gain a voice from the skies had announced, that the reward of his industry should be his learning, — not honor, not wealth, but knowledge. How incredulous are multitudes now, who think there must be something beyond to which righteousness is the avenue, but who are rebuked by the decisive declaration of Jesus, that this itself is the reward of its acquisition. To be righteous is the largest satisfaction that humanity can reach. Equally plain is the instruction concerning the means. They who hunger and thirst for it shall obtain it. Intense desire — a desire which can neither be put to rest nor be diverted from its object by any thing short of this object, or any thing different from it — for which no other similitude could be found so apt as the craving of those appetites which must be satisfied or a man must die, — such desire is the way to fruition. Where this is felt, *there* will be satisfaction as the consequence. He will be righteous, he will be

blessed, whose chief desire, whose ruling passion is, to be righteous.

Thus does Christianity, through the voice of its Divine Founder, proclaim righteousness to be the chief good, and the earnest desire for it to be the way to its attainment. So does it place a perfect character above every thing else, and make the inward life the indispensable condition of blessedness. For what is righteousness? It is, as the word denotes, the right state of a man, — of the whole man, in his secret and his visible life, in his principles, motives, thoughts, feelings, dispositions and habits. Righteousness, (a word that has slipped out of use, while other words, neither so expressive nor so comprehensive, have taken its place,) righteousness is regard to *the right*, and exemplification of it. It is being just what one should be, doing just what one ought to do; walking in the straight way, keeping the path of rectitude at whatever cost of difficulty or whatever sacrifice of temptation. It is, then, a state of the mind and a habit of the life, to which we are pointed by our Lord in the language before us. In other words, it is *character*, — personal excellence. This is pronounced by him to be man's best possession; to secure which he must supremely desire it.

The great purpose of the Gospel, therefore, as I understand it, is to produce personal excellence, or, as the Apostle has admirably described it, to make us "perfect men in Christ Jesus." "Righteousness," this is the word which unlocks the treasures of the Christian revelation. The disciple of Christ must be a righteous man; the Christian preacher must preach righteousness.

It may be objected that this is a partial view of Christianity, and that other things besides righteousness were

made the subject of the Saviour's mission and teaching. On the contrary I maintain that this term, and this alone, describes the whole design and influence of his ministry, that it includes every thing that belongs to the Gospel, and that any view which falls short of the limits embraced within this description is inadequate, if not unfaithful. What is there which this excludes? which it does not require as a necessary part of its significance? Let us examine it and satisfy ourselves on this point. See, for example, how as with outstretched hands it points at once towards God and towards man, indicating alike the duties of piety and of philanthropy. Towards God, I say; for righteousness we have been directed by the very composition of the word to define as conformity to the right; but what is the right, except the will of God. No other standard certainly does Christianity recognise, and no other has human research or invention ever been able to discover. Right is not an abstract thing, as some teachers in philosophy seem anxious to represent it; nor a mere name for the unalterable fitness of things; but the product and expression of the divine will. That is right which God approves, and righteousness in man is nothing but harmony between him and God. Faith in God, then, is the very foundation of this righteousness, its root and support. I do not believe in the reality nor in the possibility of a perfect character in man without faith in God, nor do you, nor does any one. A righteous man without piety! the terms will not stand together; the one part of the sentence annuls the other. Granting that the atheist may be a man of veracity, generosity, honor, or the undevout man industrious and benevolent, he is in each case only partly right and mainly wrong. He is no

more entitled to be called a righteous man in the Scriptural, which is the etymological and only just sense, than a room may be said to be illuminated with two or three farthing candles in its remote corners. The central light is wanting. Faith in God, leading to all the issues of a practical piety, such as reverence, trust, worship, and steadfast obedience, is therefore indispensable to the character which is found in them whose experience sustains the words of our text.

To man also does this word point, indicating the duties of philanthropy. For how can one encompassed by the relations which bind him to his fellow-creatures be *right*, while he neglects the offices of kindness, good-will, and various service which arise out of these relations? Impossible. Let him be ever so strict in his self-government and ever so constant in his prayers, he is manifestly wrong in not embracing every opportunity of conferring benefit on others. He a needy, frail creature, is a type to himself of the necessities and frailties of universal humanity. His consciousness, therefore, is a perpetual intimation to him of his duty. He, too, if he be a Christian, acknowledges the will of God as the standard of right; and this will, whether he read it in the lessons of Providence or in the instructions of Christ, requires him to love and serve his fellow-men. His own soul tells him that it is wrong not to care for them and do for them all that he can,— to make himself a friend, a benefactor, a brother to all within his reach. Life reiterates the commandment, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," through the thousand echoes which experience throws back upon his heart. And Christianity taking up the same inculcation gives it a breadth and depth of meaning, that makes the

individual's neighborhood as large as the world, and calls up his love from the very bottom of his heart. The experience likewise of the blessedness of that character which we are contemplating, springing out of the conviction that it is the highest good of man, compels one by whom it is realized to exert himself to the utmost to communicate to others the same satisfaction. He wishes to serve them, that he may stand right with himself. How can he serve them best? His own experience shows him, in no way so well as in bringing them to righteousness. Therefore does he make it his purpose and endeavor to convert men from the error of their ways, that they may keep the straight and narrow way which leadeth unto life. Thus we see that the faith and the experience of the true Christian, if we admit that he is described in the text, concur in kindling up in his soul the flame of philanthropy, of that philanthropy which studies man's highest interests and aims to promote his spiritual welfare. I know it has been said that this doctrine of righteousness is cold and narrow, and that if preached alone it will make men think only of themselves. What a gross misapprehension of its import! Just recur to the original force of the expression. Can a man be *right*, can he feel himself to be right, while he neglects any means of bringing others to experience the blessedness with which his own soul is full through harmony between all its exercises and the Divine will? No. Perfect righteousness is perfect love, — love to God, and love to man, — love flowing out in sentiment, in speech, in act, even as the sun pours down its beams, freely, continually, and without diminution.

What we have now found to be true in regard to the great divisions of the religious life, is equally true in

respect to every branch of Christian doctrine or duty. Righteousness includes them all. Is it repentance, for example, on which any one insists as the commencement of salvation? The necessity of repentance is of course a part of that doctrine of righteousness, which requires the soul to be conformed in its temper and habits to the known will of God. A rightly disposed mind must regard its former deviation from rectitude with sorrow and shame; nor can one who has done wrong put himself in a right state, except by repenting of his evil courses, as he ceases to do evil and learns to do well. Is it regeneration, which is made the essential part of Christian experience? He who becomes righteous must not only turn from sin with abhorrence, but must loathe the corrupt tastes and bad practices of his former life; and what is this but regeneration, when instead of coveting sinful indulgence he hungers and thirsts for that which is its opposite. Is it faith in Christ, which is demanded as the basis of a new life? The righteousness of which we are treating is that which Christ enjoined, to the establishment of which in the world he consecrated all the influences of his life and death, and which has had its only full exhibition in his character; which therefore cannot exist, except in a very imp r c degree, where faith in Christ is not cherished, but where this is maintained grows into complete manifestation. I t spirituality of character, which is represented as the end nd effect of the Gospel? If by the spiritual life be understood the culture of all the powers which belong to our nature, under a just sense of their relative importance and with an habitual regard to God as their source and the termination of the successive stages of their development, it is manifest that such cul-

ture is identical with the growth of personal righteousness; and if any thing else be meant, it is not less clear that the language is used as the symbol of a mysticism which needs to be enlightened, or of an enthusiasm which needs to be restrained. Whatever be the view taken of Christianity in its relations to the individual or to the world, I am confident that, if it be a view sanctioned by the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, it will come within the survey obtained from this central position of the righteousness of which I speak, of which Christ spoke when he said, "Blessed are they who who do hunger and thirst after it, for they shall be filled." A righteousness covering, filling, controlling, and where there has been past negligence, transforming the whole man, this is the one thing needful. This is indispensable, this is sufficient. With this a man is a Christian; without it he is not a Christian. With this he is a child of God, whose inheritance is heaven; without he is a child and an heir of hell.

This doctrine should be believed, heartily and practically believed. Then should we see, — were such belief general, — what has never yet been seen, a nation, a world consecrated to God. Then should we see, in this land, throughout Christendom, over the face of the globe, a revival of religion that would make the heavens bend over us in rejo c ng at the full establishment of that kingdom of righteousness and pea e and holy joy, of which Christ laid the foundations when by pass ng through the regions of death he justified the faith of men in him as the Prince of life. To gain for this doctrine the reception which it is worthy to receive, did he take upon himself the form of a servant, and exchanging the glories of the Father's face for the ignominy of the cross en-

counter what wrung from him a prayer, that, if it were possible, the Divine counsels might release him from the fearful task he had undertaken. To quicken in men the desire, that so they might secure the fruition, of righteousness, was that wonderful chapter of inspiration and martyrdom written in the world's history, to which for eighteen centuries believing hearts have looked back with a gratitude too big for words. And surely it is time that this doctrine was acknowledged, and its place of authority and primacy allowed it. But still are men incredulous; and Christian people merit the rebuke which Jesus addressed to his immediate followers in that sharp though softened reproof, "Oh, ye of little faith." Faith is needed in the supreme importance and the sufficiency of righteousness. Few are thoroughly persuaded concerning its obligation, and a still smaller number devote themselves to it as the great want, and interest, and glory of a human being. Oh, when shall the generation of the righteous occupy the earth! Then shall be the millennial period. Then shall the Gospel have accomplished its office, and Christ shall reign king of nations as he is king of saints.

We want righteous men. This is the great want of the time. We want not dogmatists, nor religionists, nor visionaries; but righteous men. We want not criticism, nor philosophy, nor Orthodoxy, nor zeal,— there is enough of all these; but righteousness, of which there is very little. We want righteous men in public life, and in private life, — righteous statesmen, and righteous husbandmen, — righteous merchants, and righteous mechanics, — students who shall study righteousness, and practise what they study, — rich men who shall make a right use of their riches, and poor men who shall make a right use of their

poverty — men who, whether as fathers, husbands, neighbors or citizens, still shall make righteousness the groundwork and superstructure of their lives, — women who, whether in the domestic circle or in the wider connexions of society, shall aim to fulfil all righteousness, — children, whose training shall be in the ways of righteousness, — all, in all situations and relations, righteous, heartily, thoroughly righteous. It is not a superficial nor an occasional excellence, which we say is demanded by the necessity of the times and by the authority of religion; but an excellence, a *righteousness*, — that is the word which I love to repeat, — which shall reach down to the lowest strata of character, and reach up to its loftiest pinnacles; not like the snow which dazzles us from Alpine heights, or the ore which meets us in spots as we examine the mountain's sides, but like the principle of organic matter which we find pervading every kind of soil and every species of mineral formation. It is not a partial correspondence between the human character and the Divine will, on which the interpreter of Christianity must insist, as he applies its requisitions either to himself or to others; but "as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, — 'See,' saith he, 'that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount,'" so must the Christian conform his whole being, in all its principles and details, in all its habits and exercises, to the mind of God as expressed in the teaching and life of Jesus Christ. This is Christian righteousness, which handles details as well as determines principles, which makes a man's carriage right in his family as well as beyond his own doors, and his heart right beneath the Omniscient Eye as well as

before the judgment of his fellow-men. Oh let me have this righteousness, and though I be stripped of every thing else, I am rich, I am strong, I am happy. Let me have this, and I will go on through life with a consistent behavior and a tranquil mind, I will reflect from my actions the purity, and will entertain in my soul the blessedness of heaven.

It follows from what has been said, that the denomination which would plant itself upon the true ground of Christian doctrine and commandment, must make righteousness the theme of its preaching and the goal of its efforts. Has any one of the various sects into which the Church is divided done this? Is any one of the denominations which prevail in our country engaged in this work? I fear not. I apprehend that, unless there be one exception which I shall presently point out, the sect is yet to arise, which shall establish itself upon this ground, and there abide unmoved by reproach or by example. I mean not to deny that most of the Christian sects, now and in former ages, have included righteousness within the scope of their instruction. But they have not taught it as the chief thing, they have not taught it as the *one* thing, which like Joseph's sheaf in his dream stands upright, while all the other topics of exhortation, like the other sheaves which he beheld, stand round about and make obeisance. Ecclesiastical history, I suppose, will show that every division of the Christian Church has had some truth, some idea substantially correct, of which it has made itself the defender and propagator. I presume that it is necessary to the existence of a sect beyond the duration of the circumstances which may create a

temporary schism, that it represent some idea which belongs to the household of Christian truths. It is probable, if not certain, that in its eagerness to unfold this idea it wi l do injustice to other members of this household. Still, in the competition of sects to exhibit each its favorite idea, the different points in the circle of Divine revelation will be made conspicuous to the eyes of men, and great benefit accrue to the Christian world. What I notice as most worthy of remark is, that no denomination has seized upon the grand idea of righteousness, and labored to give it the prominence which it ought to hold. Is not this true? It is easy to discover on what the principal sects by which we are surrounded lay the most stress. Is it character, personal excellence, the righteousness of which we ha e been discoursing? I think not. The idea which lies at the foundation of the vast fabric of the Roman Catholic communion is the visible unity of the Church. The idea which Calvinism has striven to expound and enforce is faith, or belief in certain propositions. The idea from its attachment to which the Baptist denomination within a few years has been able to secure such an increase of numbers and influence, is not the validity of a rite, but something more vital than this, to wit, the authority of the letter of Scripture. I need not multiply examples in proof of the remark, that any sect, to live and grow, must adopt some idea as the basis of its separation from the rest of the Church. Now does the history of past ages, or observation in our own times, show that the inculcation of righteousness has been the distinctive undertaking of any of the innumerable denominations of the past or the present? Let us pause upon this in-

quiry, for I wish to draw from it an inference of some moment.

The sects of Christendom may be arranged under five designations, according to the character of the ideas which they have made the special objects of attention. First in importance, because they comprise the great majority of the Christian world, are the ecclesiastical sects, with whom the idea of the Church is fundamental and essential. To this class belong the Romish and the Episcopal bodies. Strike from Romanism or from Episcopalianism the idea of an organization embracing and controlling all its members, and these forms of visible existence, covered as they are with the moss of ages and surrounded by the fondest associations, would soon fall to pieces; the ivy would not be strong enough to sustain the tree whose heart had perished. Next in the number of their adherents are the doctrinal sects, or those who exaggerate the value of opinions, making some article or system of faith the object around which each has gathered its strength, and from which it draws its vitality. Take away this faith, and nothing remains as a principle of cohesion; as we have seen in the Presbyterian denomination of this country, now sundered into two independent and hostile bodies, and as will doubtless be seen in others of what are called the Orthodox sects. Then follow those small but fervent companies of believers, who arrogate the title of spiritual, and may perhaps best be described as the meditative or introspective sects; whose watch-word is the "inner light." Such have been the Quakers and the Mystics of different periods, and here probably should the religious Transcendentalists of our own day be reckoned. Akin to these, but of a distinct order, may be ranked the devo-

tional sects, or those who have insisted on a closer walk with God than prevailed around them, but who have mistaken the nature of this walk by describing it rather as a separation from the usual concerns of life than as a religious fidelity in the midst of them. Into this division, notwithstanding the obvious difference between them in some respects, would fall both the Puritans and the Methodists of English history. And, lastly, we may count those sects which have been distinguished by their anxiety to reduce the supernatural in religion to the least possible amount, and whose methods of interpreting and using the Bible indicate that the excellence of reason is the idea which has captivated their minds. Of this class we may find examples both in England and Germany, and in our own land. To some one or other of these classes, or inclining partly to one and partly to another, according to the relation which the ideas they have adopted sustain to these outlines, would an acquaintance with their origin and character enable us to distribute the several sects of Christendom. And now, in which of these do we find that regard for righteousness, as the main idea of the religious life, on which I have insisted in this discourse? In none of them. Something else is made prominent, while this, if not overlooked, is left in the back-ground. In none of those representations which they give of the Gospel is righteousness the principal figure, which by determining the relation of the other parts of the picture secures its harmony and effect. A sect is needed, which shall understand and exhibit the proper position and influence of this idea.

Before proceeding to the inference which may be founded on this remark, I would confirm its justice by direct-

ing your survey over the present activity of the Christian Church. To what results are the efforts of religious zeal and Christian philanthropy tending? In what enterprises are they engaged? Laudable and noble are the purposes which they contemplate, but they fall short of a righteousness as extensive as human relations and as deep as human motives. I do not question, for I do not doubt, the propriety of the operations which Christian benevolence, though under sectarian banners, is pursuing; nor do I entertain any doubt that much good is done. But still it is neither the tendency nor the effect of these operations to implant in men's minds a persuasion, that the highest service to which the child of God can aspire on earth will be found in the daily discharge of duty under the familiar circumstances of life. The effect of much of what is said and done for the cause of Christ is, to turn away attention from the truth, that the cause of Christ is best promoted when character is formed and strengthened and perfected by the influences of his religion. How seldom do the audience collected at a Missionary meeting, or on the anniversary of any of our religious Associations, return to their homes with a deeper impression of the importance of habitual self-government, and calm but ceaseless improvement. How few are made to feel, in consequence of their sympathy with what are styled the great Christian movements of the age, that that which it chiefly concerns them to do is to "live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" How many through this very sympathy are hindered from leading "quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty." I would not be understood to condemn or disapprove of these movements. Rather let me say, success attend them! But there is need of some-

thing more than has yet been undertaken. There is need of a movement that shall strike lower, and aim higher, and work with a wider influence upon character and life, than any that has yet been commenced. Let us see a movement that shall result in making Christians take up their cross daily and follow Christ, in the allegiance of true discipleship, through the cares and labors and trials and pleasures of ordinary life, through the passages of the soul's secret experience as well as along the ways that lie open to public view.

A work then remains to be done, an office to be undertaken, an idea to be practically unfolded, by some of those who bear the Christian name. On whom does it devolve if not on us, brethren, and those who with us are not ashamed to bear with the name of Christian the farther designation of Unitarian? The inference which I promised to draw from the glance we have cast over the Christian Church is this, — that we as a denomination must make it our business to spread righteousness through the land. This is the idea which must give stability and life and force to our denomination. To illustrate this idea, and to commend it to the understandings and hearts of others, must be the service to which we shall devote ourselves as the disciples of a crucified but exalted Master. This is our proper and peculiar service. Others, in their ignorance or their misguided preference, have left it for our hands to execute. Shame on us, if we let it lie without even attempting its performance! Shame and guilt! guilt heavier far than can rest on others who mistake the central principle of the Gospel. If we have taken a more just view than they of Christianity, we are bound, by the obligations of fidelity to ourselves and to them, to put

forth our best endeavors to make them see what we see of its divine proportions. I said just now that there might be one exception to the remark, that all existing sects had neglected to make righteousness the origin and end of their labors. This exception I would find among ourselves. Yet I fear that we have been so unmindful of the privilege which Providence seems to have cast upon us, and of the glory which others have left for us to acquire, that we must speak with hesitation of our discernment of the true basis on which a Christian denomination should raise the pyramid of its achievements. We believe that righteousness is the whole duty and the chief good of man. Here then is the ground which we must occupy. On this belief we must act, — both individually, and in the use of our associated energies. Our present persuasions furnish us with just what is best fitted to make us a prosperous and effective denomination. Here planting ourselves, we may assail the strong-holds of error on the one side, and of sin on the other, with as sure a prospect of success as can ever be enjoyed by human foresight. The activity and zeal which environ us and spread round in constantly enlarging circles, supply a reason for our engaging in this work. With undeniable good that comes from the excitement which other sects delight to feel and to diffuse, this evil, it must be confessed, attends its diffusion,— that a false view of the nature of religion is likely to be introduced into the mind, or to be confirmed where it already exists. The decisive objection to revivals, when conducted in the least exceptionable manner, is, that they tend to strengthen the belief in the community, that religion consists in certain frames of mind or certain peculiar experiences, rather than in the conscientious and uni-

form discharge of duty amidst the circumstances of familiar life. This error we must combat. It is the great error; worse by far than any speculation that may be entertained concerning the Trinity, or the connexion of the cross of Christ with the salvation of the sinner. We alone, of all Christian sects, can effectually resist its establishment in the minds of the people, because we stand alone in adopting a different conception of the religious experience. We must overpower the glare of a false theory by pouring forth the steady brightness of the truth.

Our conception, I say, of the religious experience is peculiar; because we make it to consist in a progressive obedience to the laws of God, rising from the imperfect steps of a new life to the perfection of a vigorous and uniform virtue. It has been the reproach which others have endeavored to lay on us, though in truth our honorable distinction, that we have made righteousness the great theme of our preaching and the nucleus of our religious associations. It has been admitted, by those who have made it an occasion of rebuke, that we have urged morality as the essential interest of man. I need not stop to vindicate Unitarianism from the censure with which it has been loaded for attaching such importance to character. It neither requires nor will it accept such vindication. When we shrink from acknowledging this to be its distinction, we betray our ignorance or we expose our fear. It is the distinction, and the glorious distinction, of the Christianity which we expound, and which alone we believe is taught in the Bible, that it makes *character* the essential, and the only essential requisition. Let not its friends be ashamed of this distinction, nor afraid to avow it. Bring it before the people, and keep it before their

sight; and whether they admire or scoff, whether they respond to our appeal in words of sympathy or of warning, still let us be faithful in asserting this its divine claim to the attention of mankind. On this point I wish we might speak with a tone of decision, that is not common enough with us. Without imitating the dogmatism or the bigotry of other sects, we may demand for the great principle of righteousness the attention which it deserves. In regard to those opinions which fall within the province of theology, and in our adherence to which we differ from other Christians, we may not feel ourselves justified in using such positive language as is familiar on their tongues; for, however clear may be our faith, we must still confess our own as well as their fallibility. But in regard to the importance of personal righteousness we may not be silent, nor speak doubtingly. Firmly and fearlessly, and from a spirit of kindness towards the souls of men, we must lay open the solemn and weighty import of the commandment, which calls us all to purity and integrity of life. Whether they whom we address, I repeat, will hear or will forbear, will deride or will consent, we must, — if we love their souls, or our own, or the truth as it is in Jesus, we must — exhort, and charge, and beseech them to clothe themselves in the righteousness which is through faith, as the only garment that will admit them to the presence and joy of the Lamb, the judge of quick and dead, when he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

That this is the true and natural basis on which we must build ourselves up as a religious denomination, I trust, is placed beyond dispute. And now I add, that it

is the only ground which will remain firm beneath us in any such attempt. In our dissent from other portions of the Church, or in our active opposition to them, we may *seem* to have chosen some other ground of union; but it could answer only a temporary purpose. At one time we may have appeared to lean upon the principle, that Scripture is the only conclusive authority in matters of religion; but this is the principle on which Protestantism was founded, and however far other sects may have departed from the practice it imposes, they will never suffer us to obtain the credit of its exclusive possession. At other times we may have seemed to choose the principle of liberty, intellectual and spiritual liberty, as that on which we would erect an antagonism to the opinions and usages about us; but this is not a principle which will mark us as a *Christian* sect, for many who reject revelation maintain the right of private judgment and of free speech with a zeal which we may imitate, but cannot surpass. Once there was reason to think that the corner-stone of our denomination might be laid in the doctrine of the Divine unity, and an attempt was made and for years pursued upon this presumption. But if it has not wholly failed, it certainly has not rewarded the hopes which were held by its friends. It is now, to say the least, very doubtful, whether any article of theological belief, however intimate be its connexion with piety or virtue, can be made by us the common ground and occasion of effort. Identity of belief upon any theological point will not hold us together. The views which we entertain on the questions which have been in controversy the last thirty years are, beyond all denial, making their way through the community. Where they cannot eradicate,

they in many instances soften the prevalent theology. But as a denomination, it seems not to be our appointed work to make men *Unitarians*. We must have a broader platform of sectarianism, if I may so speak, than is indicated by the name we have so long worn. And no where do I find a platform which is at once broad enough and sound enough, being alike true and comprehensive in the terms by which it may be expressed, except in the view of religion on which I have now dwelt,— that view which is emphatically Christian, for we have drawn its symbolic language from the preaching of Christ,— and according to which righteousness is the end of the Gospel and the glory of man.

As I interpret therefore the signs of the times and the instruction of Scripture, the office to which we are called in Providence is not to spread a doctrinal opinion, but to diffuse a practical religion. It is our privilege, and duty, to inculcate the obligation of personal righteousness by speech and by example. The importance of a character imbued with the spirit of Christ and moulded into his likeness is the point, that central point in the Gospel whence stream forth the brightest rays of truth and grace, which it remains for *us* to bring under the notice of men, — whether Christians, unbelievers, Jews, or Heathens, — and on which it must be our labor to rivet their regards, and with it intertwine their sympathies.

Our adoption of this course need not lessen our interest nor abate our exertions in behalf of our peculiar tenets. We need not contend less zealously for the faith, because we endeavor to set forth the paramount importance of the life, of the saints. On the contrary, the

stronger shall be our conviction that righteousness is the ultimate purpose of the Gospel, the more highly shall we value, the more earnestly defend, the truths which sustain this righteousness in the soul and in the world. A disregard of our doctrinal peculiarities will not increase our force nor cement our union. But in respect to our own opinions as well as to the other opinions that are accepted in the Christian Church, let us hold fast the principle, that they are but means, not the end. Doctrines are of vital consequence, as the occasions or aids of spiritual growth; but like the sunshine that falls upon the sand and the rain that sinks beneath its surface, they cannot convert the sterile soil into a fruitful field. There must be a principle of life, and evidence of life, as well as the influences by which life is nourished. A man may be a very zealous Unitarian, or a very zealous Trinitarian, and yet know nothing of the righteousness that is in Christ. Still our *faith* is worth immeasurably more effort and sacrifice than we have yet made for it. And no method which we could pursue for displacing the error that now fills the minds of the community would, I believe, be so successful, as the earnest inculcation of character as the essential thing in religion. The prevalence of Orthodoxy at any time, that is, the prevalence of the prevalent system, (for this is the real meaning of the phrase,) depends very much on the resolute and earnest tone of address which is assumed by those who lead the people, and whom they follow because they think it must be safe to follow those who speak with so much confidence. On the obligation of personal rectitude, universal and uniform righteousness, as I have already remarked, we may speak as confidently as any religious teachers in the land. And

let the people but once come to see that Christian character is that on which they must rest their hope of heaven, and I greatly mistake the relations of truth, if their faith in the dogmas of a false theology do not dwindle down to the vanishing point of a creed. Wrong opinions will drop out of their minds, like the icicles which melt away before the warm sunlight.

Assuming this to be the work to which we must consecrate our energies, the question instantly arises, — how shall we execute this service? What does it become us as a denomination to do, that we may hasten the day when among all people "judgment shall run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream?" The limits of this occasion do not permit me to consider the methods by which we may discharge our part in the ministry of the everlasting Gospel, nor do I feel myself competent to designate the instrumentalities — perhaps of various kinds — which should be put in operation. There is one remark, however, of a general nature, which I cannot but make, and would urge with all the strength that may be drawn from an entire conviction of its truth. The methods which any sect may adopt for the execution of the task that Providence has assigned it, in the Church or the world, should be in harmony with its fundamental principle; nay, more; they should be the spontaneous expression of its activity. Whatever is artificial in its character, or foreign in its origin, will be found of little use. The movements of a sect must grow out of its life, not be borrowed from some other quarter to sustain its life. Imitation is always feeble, and seldom commands admiration. Even Chinese copies are worth less than coarser originals. Men love freshness better than they

love exactness. History will show us that the sects which have been most successful in diffusing their principles, have adopted those courses of action which were most congenial to their principles. And this is no more than we might have expected. Just as a man can act with most effect, if he act naturally, so must a denomination put forth its greatest efficiency in its own way. Instead, therefore, of regarding the adoption among us of methods that have long been used by other sects, (and some of which they are now laying aside,) as a proof of greater vitality, or as affording promise of greater results than we have hitherto realized, I think such methods can be made useful in our hands only through the transformation they may receive from the principle of life already in our body. So far as the introduction of customs common in other sections of the Church indicates a spirit of inquiry, anxious to ascertain the best possible modes of operation, or a discontent with our own inertness as that of which we are both tired and ashamed, I would welcome and encourage it. But let us not rely upon these foreign customs. If they are not indigenous, they probably will not be healthy when transplanted into our soil. The danger is, that we shall *rely* upon them. Especially would I interpose a caution against making the use of methods borrowed from other sects the test of Christian character. The test of Christian character! It has no test but itself. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." God save us by a miracle of illumination, if our own good sense and our self-respect will not save us, from the error which we have unsparingly condemned in others, of substituting any thing in the place of consistent obedience. No use of forms, no fervor of speech or feeling, no multi-

plication of outward services or social exercises, will be accepted by Christ as the proof of discipleship. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." This was his language, and by this language alone should we judge ourselves or one another. We sin against our Master, as well as against our brethren, when we set up any other standard than that he has appointed. And the only standard that can claim him for its author is expressed in the single word *righteousness*.

I have said that I would not attempt to point out the methods most suitable for us to bring into use. But I may be allowed to observe, that excitement does not seem to me to be an instrument of which we can avail ourselves to much effect. Plain, earnest, affectionate appeals to our fellow-men let us adopt; serious and pungent exhibitions of truth let us present to our own souls. Let our preaching be more direct and solemn than it is, and our lives incomparably more pure and holy than they are. Of fervent, practical religion, it has been my aim to show that we cannot have too much. There is no such thing as being too good, or over-righteous. But let calmness rather than excitability distinguish us. The force which endures is always calm. Observation, I think, teaches us to distrust, and even to dread excitement. It is hurtful in an individual, it is dangerous in a community. It is bad in the world, and I cannot believe it is good in the Church. It may produce transient effects that will delight us, but its permanent operation will not be salutary.

Avoiding excitement, or at least keeping a wakeful eye to escape the dangers into which it might lead us, we may still maintain in our denomination a fervent life that

will manifest itself in every form of a healthful activity. There should be no lack of zeal, but rather a more equal and durable zeal, a zeal which depends not on circumstances, — on the sympathy which may be enkindled, or the success which may be enjoyed, — but such as is fed by the springs of holy and enlightened conviction. Why may we not be as zealous in this cause as in any that ever stirred human hearts or roused Christian energies? What more solemn persuasion to be faithful, alike to ourselves and to others, comes from any doctrine that has ever been made the shrine of moral power? I believe that it is through our devotion to the cause of righteousness in the advocacy, by word and by life, of the truth, that to be, — not to believe, or profess, or feel, but to be — what a Christian should be is the main thing, we are to become a warm-hearted, coöperative, effective sect. I do not believe that this view of the position which we must hold among the disciples of the Cross is suited to make us languid or cold. Sooner could I believe that "the spirits of the just made perfect," in that heaven of righteousness in which they dwell, are listless and idle. It may be said that to adopt this view of our duty is to go back to the early days of Unitarianism, — to the morning twilight, doubtful and chilly. Be it so; I am willing then to go back, and I fear not that I shall find no warmth in the company of those who were the champions of this cause when most of us were learning to lisp the truth. It seems to me that we do singular injustice to those men who deserve at our hands honor and gratitude, when we allow ourselves to speak of the meagre and lifeless character of our faith in former times; when we congratulate ourselves as if life was just beginning to be poured into our

denomination, and talk of the days that are past as the days of denial and dryness, out of which we have come, — thanks to our later birth, — into the era of progress and vitality. The period of denial! Was there nothing but denial in the tones with which Buckminster melted all hearts, or the words in which Kirkland instructed attentive minds? Nothing but denial in the preaching of Freeman, and Thacher, and the Abbots, and of him who on this very spot made out of a little one a great congregation? Denial, coldness, deadness, — are these the titles to be associated with the early influence of that other sainted name that has just been added to the Church in heaven? No. There was a positive faith then in our pulpits, and a living faith; and great was the success of the preached word in those days. I know it was a period of denial, — first of the denial that is expressed in silence, and then of the denial that belongs to controversy; but not of denial only, nor of denial chiefly. And justice, if not modesty, should teach us to speak the whole truth.

The fact is, that Unitarianism in this country began upon and from this very principle on which I have been discoursing. The early ministers of this faith preached *righteousness*, when the clergy about them were preaching *doctrine*. Hence did their words find such a response from their hearers; and it was not till the effect of their instructions in subverting the dominion of error had alarmed the advocates of the old theology, that they were called into the field of sectarian strife and were compelled to take up the weapons of dogmatic warfare. The circumstances of the present time doubtless demand new methods of operation, but we give poor promise of discharging

our duty by undervaluing the services of those who have preceded us.

The positive side of Unitarianism is seen in the place which it assigns to righteousness. Here is no denial, but the denial of sin; no indifference, but that which is produced towards earthly temptation and wordly opinion by an engrossing regard to the will of God. Here we may *affirm*. Here let us abide.

Our adherence to this central principle will enable both of the parties, if such they may be called, into which our denomination is divided upon the question of Christian effort, to carry out their respective views in harmony and with efficiency. There are, on the one hand, those who believe that the only way to diffuse Christianity throughout the world is by implanting it in the individual breast, that outward change or social reform can avail little until the soul is renewed, and that therefore our efforts should be directed, principally at least, to the awakening of penitence or spiritual life in the soul. Those who take this view of the manner in which the kingdom of Heaven must be extended on earth, will find in the doctrine that character, and this alone is indispensable, the instrument most suited to their purpose. Let them apply it to the consciences of the unbelieving, the worldly-minded, the careless, and they will gain an advantage which they may use to the greatest effect. Above all, let them show their faith in this doctrine by the righteousness of their own lives. Let them preach it through their own characters. Oh! that we were, one and all, such disciples as Christ would own, not because we say, "Lord, Lord," but because we do the things that he has commanded. The force of example in an individual is

everywhere acknowledged. What would not be the force of an example of purity, rectitude, consistent, unblemished goodness in a denomination? It would change the face of the country, it would be felt throughout the world. Theologians that condemned would yet admire, and sinners that derided would be won to imitate.

On the other hand are those who contend that all attempts to extend the triumphs of the Gospel by individual conversion must be comparatively fruitless, while society is oppressed by such a load of abuses, and man is the victim of unpropitious circumstances. They therefore desire the reform of institutions, the regeneration of society. But how would they effect this? Or rather, how only can they reasonably hope to effect it? By the infusion of Christian influence into the institutions and agencies which encompass individual man, — by bringing the truth to bear upon circumstances till it shall have modified or entirely changed them. What truth, what influence, so suitable to this purpose as that which is expressed by the one word, righteousness? Circumstances are not *right*, — they are not what God meant they should be; institutions are not *right*, — human ignorance and folly have built them up; society is not *right*, — it must be remodelled. Here is the very lever with which to work. Here, in one word, are indicated the evil which must be overthrown, and the means by which it may be removed.

The open and consistent exhibition of the doctrine on which I have now insisted will, likewise, secure to us the sympathy of large portions of other Christian denominations throughout our land. While other sects have in their theological statements and in their sectarian action

given an undue preference to other points, there has always been a deep and wide feeling, that righteousness is a requisition, and a prominent requisition of the Gospel. It has been impossible for men to overlook the fact, that the disciples of Jesus Christ, that "Just One," are called to the culture of personal goodness. There is therefore in all the churches of the land a disposition, perhaps not yet clearly understood by those in whose breasts it lives, to respond to our exhortation to "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole" duty, interest, and life "of man." Let us present this truth distinctly, free from the embarrassments by which it has been surrounded by other teachers, and thousands of hearts will welcome the annunciation as that which meets their strongest convictions. Let our exposition of Christianity be alike simple and forcible, and even those who most earnestly oppose our views as imperfect will not dare to question our great principle, that "he who doeth not righteousness is not of God," while multitudes will cordially assent to that "form of sound words" which relieves our religion from all appearance of inconsistency or weakness.

With such encouragements, coming alike from our past history and our present position, from our relation to other portions of the Church and from our internal state, from our unity and from our difference in unity, from the mistakes and from the wants which we perceive around us, steadily and resolutely let us devote ourselves to the work of righteousness, — to its growth among ourselves, and to its diffusion through society. This is our appropriate undertaking, and oh! what blessings will descend upon our hearts, should they not rest

on our names, if we faithfully accomplish what is before us. Never did a denomination enter upon its ministry to mankind with such pledges of success as invite us into the path of duty. The world is weary of the yoke of sin. The whole creation on earth is "groaning to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." We may apply the means of its redemption. Various means, besides those which *we* should use, have been tried, and how little have they effected. Let us diligently press the righteousness of the Christian character upon men as their only way of salvation, and yet the highest felicity to which they can aspire, and never was a doctrine preached on earth, since inspiration and miracle returned to heaven with the last of those who preached Christianity in its early days, that could so awaken the gratitude and win the faith of multitudes. Go forth then, friends and brethren, go forth in sacred companionship, and though you be but a small band in the midst of the hosts by which you are surrounded, yet with righteousness written on your lives and with this declaration on your lips, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," you may conquer unbelief and contempt and irreligion. False doctrine and evil practice shall retire before you, and that hour shall come, which prophecy announces and humanity seeks with longing heart, when he who is styled "the sun of righteousness" shall arise with healing in his beams, and the nations shall rejoice in his brightness.

1st Series. No. 185.

RELIGIOUS FORMS AND OBSERVANCES.

By Rev. NATHANIEL HALL.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.
DECEMBER, 1842.

Price 2 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, 2 SCHOOL STREET.

RELIGIOUS FORMS AND OBSERVANCES.

There are two views of religious forms and observances entertained among us at the present time, both of which, it is believed, extend to an unreasonable extreme. Both of them express a truth, but both exaggerate a truth. The one regards forms as essential; the other rejects them as useless. The one identifies them with religion; the other disjoins them from it even as needed helps. The one renders them an almost idolatrous homage; the other pours upon them a proud contempt. And they both unite in *this*, certainly, — that they bear testimony to the imperfection of the human mind; to that weakness which allows it to be repelled by a distasteful and obnoxious error to the outward confines of the opposing truth, where *it* also becomes error, as really and dangerously.

It is far from desirable, in itself, to come between those who embrace opposite views, and assume the intermediate ground as the only true one. They who do so gain no favor from either class. There is nothing popular, now-a-days, in a moderate, midway position. Yet it

is the part of wisdom, surely, to be willing to modify previous conclusions; and we may well suspect the soundness of these conclusions to which we have been driven, by disgust at the extravagance of error.

Forms, we know, have been abused. They have been rested in as ends, instead of being employed as means. They have been regarded as religion itself, instead of the temporary garment that enwraped her; as the substantial edifice, instead of the scaffolding by which it rose. Men have supposed themselves the better for a mere heartless observance of them; have held themselves on this account to be saints, and as entitled to a place in heaven. Ever has it been so, and it is so now. The class of formalists is by no means extinct. It ranges on Christian ground. Beneath the shadow of a religion that is spirit and life; whose essential requirements are righteousness, purity, godliness, — holiness of living, with love to God and man its source and spring, there are those, — and they are many, — who substitute for these, the observance of days, and rites, and forms. As in the times of Christ, there were those who thought it sufficient to make the outside clean, — to fast often and pray long, — to frequent temples and synagogues, and wear disfigured countenances, to observe the injunctions of the law relating to what was merely ritual and external, while its weightier requirements were left unfulfilled, and their fulfilment unsought for, and undesired; so in these later days are there those whose all of religion is a bodily attendance upon its public services, an observance of the two great ordinances of the Christian church, the daily tracing of the eye over a certain number of the pages of the Bible, and the uttering of certain words expressive of a devotional

sensibility. Their hearts unloving and impure, their lives dishonest and selfish, they yet deem themselves, by virtue of these things which they do, to be in the way of acceptance with God, and claim to be included among the religious. There are those of another character, who, while they make the externals of religion minister to their inward growth, do yet regard them with a sort of superstitious reverence, as if they were something *more* than mere externals, and entered somewhat into the very essence of that which they help to cherish. They are sensitively tenacious of them in the precise shape and circumstance in which they have been familiar to them, and seem to consider a deviation from such familiar usage, as threatening the prosperity, almost the existence, of Christianity in the community; thus, not only regarding forms as essential, but even the *form* of forms. Surely, it is but with an ill grace that we bestow all our reproving wonder upon the superstition of the Pharisees of old, when we have among us an increasing sect, whose peculiarity, — insisted upon continually and earnestly, — is no more nor less than the employment of one mode of baptism rather than another; who win their converts solely on this ground; who, though all things were the same, not in doctrine only, but in disposition and character, before and after the reception of baptism in this mode, would celebrate the fact of such reception as constituting an important change in the individual's prospects and hopes of acceptance with God and entrance into heaven: — when, again, there are others among us who wait before they accord to another the Christian name, to know whether or not he be a stated observer of that other rite of our religion; which, however beautiful it

may be, and touching, and impressive, and hallowed by most precious associations, is yet in itself but a form, and of no meaning save as it is an expression of an inward fact, and of no value save in its tendency to the increase of that which it expresses.

And it is not strange that a disgust at this bigoted attachment to forms and observances should have forced others to the length of expressing for them, in speech and practice, an utter disregard; that the assertion of their essentialness should rebound in that of their unimportance. But the error of the former assertion does not make true the latter. The truth, as I have said, is between them. There is a superstitious bondage to forms and observances, and there is an unbelieving rejection of them; and there is, also, — and this alone I would advocate, — *a free and intelligent use of them.*

Religious forms, institutions, ordinances, are *not* unimportant. They are needed helps to the developement of the religious life. They are not religion, but they connect themselves with it as means to an end. They are not the living spirit, but they are the organs through which it breathes, and, by breathing, is expanded to a larger life. They are not practical goodness, nor is the most punctilious observance of them to be accounted as in any measure its substitute, but they may prove the instrumentality through which it is upheld. The spiritualism that rejects them as useless, may be true, in so doing, to itself, but I am sure it is not to the condition and wants of the vast majority of the Christian world. The time is not yet, when the soul in blest and buoyant freedom, can wing its own unaided flight. The time is not yet, when its inborn sentiment of religion, expanded to a

continual and spontaneous activity, asks no incitement from without itself. Such is its *visioned* glory. Such, I believe, its *destined* attainment. But far beyond us now. Now, the religious element is but partially awakened, but feebly active. It mounts but through effort. It maintains its rightful influence but through watchfulness and care. Now, the world spreads its snares not vainly for our virtue, and devotion's flame is quenched by the gusts of passion or the mists of sense, and conscience speaks unheard or unobeyed; unless the soul be weekly, yea daily, fortified and fed; unless, by every means and incitement within its reach, it seek to elevate its virtue, to inflame its devotion, to enlighten and invigorate conscience. Is it not so?

The spirituality that can dispense with forms and ordinances, and the common means of religious improvement and stability, if it be to be attained on earth, can only be by the previously faithful use of what it thus comes at length to outgrow the need of. An essential prerequisite to the soul's growth, is *thought*, *consideration*, *reflection*. Its food is truth. But truth must be apprehended by it, and laid hold of, and inwardly received and appropriated, before it can grow thereby. Truth unattended to, though it be the most enkindling and ennobling, though the words that convey it be as familiar as household words, is naught; even as the food adapted to our bodies, however nourishing, however near, is naught, until it be received by them. Thought, consideration, reflection upon the truths revealed in the Holy Word, in Life, in Nature, in the Soul, — this, I repeat, is the only condition of spiritual growth; is the only way by which truths can be apprehended and impressed. And through religious forms

and observances is the mind invited and held to this thought and consideration. They turn its attention to religious themes and serve to fix it upon them. This attention there might not be, with the many, for weeks and months, were they left to themselves to create its occasions, — were their own sense of need, were the promptings of their own nature, the only call thereto; in other words, were there no *stated* time and *definite* mode, at and through which it should be given. These, it may be thought, are considerations adapted to a very low stage of the religious life. It may be so. But are they not adapted to the state of most of us? Is that stage of the religious life which is above the need of the stated means of grace, that which we have reached? Is it not, with most, ideal only; and not the ideal nearest their experience, but that which they must work up to by long-continued effort? And if there be those — which we would not doubt — who have realized that ideal, let them not scorn, for others' sake, though for themselves they no longer need it, that which has helped them to their enviable elevation. We would not embarrass their upward movements by compelling them to bear with them the ladder of their ascent, — no longer a help, but an incumbrance; nor would we have them thrust it from them with words of disparagement and disdain.

There are those who regard with indifference the common religious forms and observances; not so much by reason of any high attainments, not because they have received from them all they have to impart, but from an idea that it savors of superstition or fanaticism to employ them. They think there is a *bondage* in it, not consistent with the genius of our religion; — that Christianity asks

for principles, not professions; a free, and not a constrained, offering; a *life* of piety, and not its occasional exercise; absolute religion and morality, and not an observance of forms and ordinances; — that it would have every day, holy; and every deed, religious; and every thought, a prayer; and the heart in perpetual communion with God and Jesus. And so it would. To this beauteous height it calls — it leads. But *how* would it lead? Through the path of *stated religious observances* — by means of *forms* and *ordinances.* — There *is* a bondage in these. But it is the bondage of the child that walks in leading strings before it has strength sufficient to its self-support. It is the bondage of the artist who compels himself to the study of others' labors before he ventures to rely upon the resources of his own matured and chastened fancy. In each case, it is a bondage *preparatory* to *freedom.* The child, indeed, may depend too long upon its proffered aid, and not trust itself when it might to its growing strength. The artist may confine himself too closely to the prescribed walks of the novitiate, and his own native powers be enfeebled for want of a free activity. And the Christian disciple may cling to forms and observances, which are not only not needed by him, but which tend to hinder the unfolding of his true life. It would be folly, however, in either case, to argue from such possible exceptions, to the general inutility of the practices named.

Yes, surely, we are to be religious always and every where; our lives a continual worship, by being continually in unison with the will Divine, — continually quickened and pervaded by a filial piety. The advocate of special religious observances may feel as strongly as any

one the beauty and desirableness of this; feel it as a demand not more of the religion of the Bible, than of nature, and the soul. And for the very reason that he feels it so strongly, may he be earnest in their advocacy. He does not advocate the one in *lieu* of the other, but *in order* to it; because he feels that only by such special religious observances can there be a uniform religious life; that would we have an ever-burning flame of devotion, we must feed and fan it in its day of flickering weakness, by frequently recurring seasons of thoughtfulness and prayer; that would we grave so deep upon our souls the impress of heavenly truth, that it shall ever live there, — feelingly and commandingly live there, amid all life's bustling cares, and besetting temptations, and depressing griefs, — it must be, — it can only be, by the weekly and daily exercises of meditation and worship.

And here we may rest the *obligation* to the employment of religious forms and seasons and observances. What, if we conclude they are not commanded in the New Testament, in so many words? The fact of their necessity in order to religious improvement and stability, constitutes of itself an obligation, than which there can be none more sacred, — more binding. The command to their employment is involved in that to a holy and godly life, so far as we have reason to believe that to the attainment of the latter the former are helpful instrumentalities. Who waits for a special command in order that he may feel the obligation of giving attention to those means of promoting his physical health which, in the Providence of God, have been placed within his reach, and been made known to him as such?

Who waits for a command in order to be assured that

God designs for him that he shall make use of all opportunities afforded him for the culture of his intellectual powers? And is it less a duty and an obligation to take care of, to cherish, to cultivate the religious sentiments and affections of our nature; and, therefore, to make use of every means and opportunity to this end, which our own experience has made us to know, or the testimony of others has lead us to believe, has a tendency to promote it?

In thus speaking of religious forms and observances, I have endeavored to give the true and rational view of them, removed at once from a superstitious dependence upon and a rash rejection of them. There is an intelligent use of them which we all need. I am not ashamed to advocate it. I confess my own experience of this needfulness. That it is *your* experience, also, my friends, I know the human heart too well, and the natural influences upon it of the world too well, to doubt. You are not what you would be in moral and religious character. You fail, daily, to live up to your convictions of duty. The temptations to selfishness, unfairness, unkindness, impatience, uncharitableness, resentment, — continually meeting you in life's various intercourse, — are often too mighty for you. Your worldly avocations are apt to engross your thoughts and attention to the forgetfulness of religion's claims. *Other* interests, — other cares crowd out of mind the one thing needful. You are conscious of spiritual dulness — of an absence of feeling on religious subjects, — of a want of faith in, and of comfort from them. Religion you do not find the blessed thing it is described to be, — that fountain of strength, — that well-spring of delight, — that pillow of repose. God is

not an ever-present reality to you; nor the Saviour a personal friend. They do not accompany you, in thought and affection, as you engage in your toils, as you walk by the way, as you sit at your homes, as you enter upon scenes of gladness and festivity, or follow, with weeping, your beloved ones to the grave. — The experience of some of you may deny all this. Blessed ones! I rejoice for you. But those who feel in any degree its truth, I ask — *why* is it true? Is it not through a remissness in the employment of the common means of religious impression and improvement? Do they have stated seasons devoted to thought and reflection on religious themes, — seasons of retirement, for self-examination and prayer? — My friends, does not our felt weakness, and continual exposure, plead with us for such seasons? Does not the unutterable worth of the soul's interests plead with us? While we use means for the attainment of every other object, will we forego them here? — Is this the only one about which we will have no particular care and make use of no especial effort; which we will fling loosely to the winds of chance and circumstances? — There may be "the form of godliness without its power." Too well we know it. But there can hardly be, as human nature is and the world is, the power of godliness without, first, the form.

1st Series. No. 186.

UNITARIANISM

NOT A NEW DOCTRINE,

BUT

GENUINE CHRISTIANITY.

By Rev. JAMES D. GREEN.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

January, 1843.

Price 4 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, 2 SCHOOL STREET.

UNITARIANISM NOT A NEW DOCTRINE,

BUT

GENUINE CHRISTIANITY.

At the time when Christianity was communicated to the world, no people had made so great advancement in learning and philosophy, and no people prided themselves so highly upon their attainments in theology, as the people of Athens. Yet, when the Apostle Paul came to preach to them the new religion, they did not close their ears against him, nor presume to denounce his doctrine without affording it a hearing. Because to them it was a *new doctrine*, they did not conclude that, *therefore*, it was *not true*. The disposition which they manifested by bringing the Apostle to the Areopagus, and asking him, — "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" — this disposition to learn the merits of the question, before they pronounced a judgment, was in the highest degree commendable, and is worthy of the imitation of us all.

In inviting your attention, reader, to a plain statement of the *doctrine of Unitarianism*, or, more properly, of the *Christian doctrine as understood by Unitarians*, I am not willing to suppose that you will listen to it under the

unfavorable impression, that, because it appears to be a *new doctrine*, it is the less likely to be *true*. Truth, indeed, or true religion, in the abstract, is eternal and immutable. But it is not so with *our ideas* of the truth, — with *our conceptions of what true religion is*. In this respect, we may be continually improving; — we may advance further and further in correct and worthy sentiments upon religion. We call *that* a *new doctrine* which is *new to us*. The presumption, then, against any doctrine, because it is *new to us*, is in exact proportion to the probability that we have attained the *whole truth;* — that, in *our views* of religion, we need no improvement, and can make no further progress. But we cannot believe it was ever intended, that, in our views of religion, we should remain stationary. No. We deem it to be a duty, which yields to no other in magnitude and importance, to avail ourselves of all opportunities for inquiry, and, with a sincere desire to learn the truth, with minds candid and open to conviction, to study the sacred volume. We shall then find that we are advancing, from time to time, in religious knowledge, and in our ideas of the truth, and that more and clearer light is continually breaking forth from God's holy word.

How is it that errors are transmitted from one generation to another, and, at length, become, as it were, sacred from their antiquity, but by being received, in each successive period, implicitly and upon authority? It is our duty freely and fearlessly to inquire, and to bring every thing we have been taught to the test of reason and of Scripture. We believe the time has never been, when this duty was more imperious, or when there was a louder call for its exercise, than at present. The age in which

we live is distinguished, beyond all that have preceded it, for the direction of the public mind to subjects of religious speculation, and for the vigilance and active effort of religious party. The same freedom, with which the inquiries of men have been long prosecuted upon other subjects, and to which the world is indebted for the vast improvements that have been made during the last three hundred years, has now, at length, though after a long delay, been extended to the subjects of religion. A disposition to inquire, and to judge, each one for himself, begins every where to prevail. Men will not, much longer, take their religion upon trust, or upon the authority of numbers or of names. They will examine the grounds of received and established opinions, and require an evidence for their faith.

Amidst the unfortunate divisions of the Christian world, and the conflicting claims of sects, how many there are, whose minds are continually vacillating between one and the other, who are driven about by every wind of doctrine, and can find no permanent resting-place for their faith and hope! Nay, how many there are, in all parts of our land, who have imbibed, from the same cause, an utter distaste for revealed religion, conceiving it to be so unsettled and uncertain, have thrown it by as unworthy of the attention of men of sense, and sought relief in the religion of nature! For these evils the remedy is to be found in free and patient inquiry. This is the only way by which we can arrive at the truth, upon the subjects of Christianity. It seems as though nothing could be more obvious than this. The truth can never be concealed or obscured by fair examination. All real evidence must be in its favor. It is only apparent or seeming evidence,

which can be brought in support of error. The truth then has nothing to fear, but rather becomes clearer and brighter by fair discussion. It is error only which shrinks from the light, conscious of its weakness seeks to avoid inquiry, and courts darkness and concealment in mystery.

In presenting an outline of Unitarian Christianity, I desire nothing more than a candid attention to its evidence. Should it not recommend itself to your understanding, and appear to you to be the doctrine of Scripture, — the doctrine of Christ and the Apostles, — it cannot be your duty, and I should be the last to desire you to receive it.

Unitarianism, whatever it may be called, whether it be regarded with favor or suspicion, whether it has been your fortune to become acquainted with it or not, — *Unitarianism is no new doctrine.* After long and anxious examination, and having no interest to receive it but what the truth presents, we firmly and conscientiously believe, that *Unitarianism was the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the Apostles;* — that is, we believe it to be *the doctrine of pure amd uncorrupt Christianity.* We are well persuaded too that it was the faith of the early Christians, for three hundred years at least, after our Saviour's time, and has been embraced by many, as the only true faith, through subsequent periods of the church, down to the present day. We have the satisfaction of knowing that it has been the faith of many of the greatest and best of men, whom the world has ever seen. It was the faith of Locke, of Newton, and of Milton, — names which are associated with all that is most exalted in intellect. It was the faith of Clarke and of Lardner, — the most able and successful advocates of Christianity against the

attacks of infidels. These great men have written largely upon the Scriptures, and the doctrines and evidences of Christianity, and have made no concealment of the fact, that they were Unitarians. We have evidence satisfactory that this faith was embraced by the pious and revered Dr. Watts, as the support and solace of his declining years. Nay; — ever since the Reformation in the sixteenth century, it has been professed by numbers, in the midst of reproach, intolerance, and persecution; and its truth has been attested by many martyrs at the stake.

By the statement of it, which I may be able to exhibit, imperfect as this statement must be, you may be able, reader, for yourself to judge what is the propriety of calling it a *new doctrine*, and what are its claims to be received as *true*.

The creed of the Unitarians is to be found only in the Bible. *The Bible is our creed, — we have no other.* We have no *system of belief, written out at length,* — no particular *list of articles*, to be subscribed or assented to, distinct from the Bible. As we believe the Bible itself to be sufficient, and all the truths of our religion to be taught so clearly there as that every one can understand them, a distinct creed, a separate system of faith, appears to be superfluous. And, not only do we think that creeds and confessions of faith are superfluous, but, if they are drawn up, not in the language of Scripture, but, as they generally are, in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, it seems to us that they must have the mischievous tendency to supersede the use of the Scriptures, and obtain, in the minds of men, that authority and veneration which are due only to the word of God. For this reason, we believe they have been, in times past, a most fertile source

of error, and have operated, as powerfully as any other cause, to render errors sacred, and perpetuate them in the church.

We receive, then, no other creed but the Bible. That contains the articles of our faith. We profess to believe all which the Bible teaches. In reading the Bible, we think it is our duty to exercise our understandings, and to form our opinions for ourselves, by diligent examination, according to the best of our abilities, and that portion of light which God has given us. We cannot believe that one person is authorized to judge for another. Each one has the right to read and study for himself, and believe what he understands his Bible to teach him. The sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the right of private judgment, (a natural and inalienable right,) these two great principles of the Reformation, are to be admitted as axioms in all our religious inquiries. Every person who professes to receive the Scriptures as a record of Divine Revelation, and to believe what he understands them to teach; — every person who professes to believe in Jesus Christ, to regard him as his master, and to receive as Christian truth what he understands him to have taught; — *every such person is entitled to the* NAME OF CHRISTIAN; and it is an unauthorized, an unjust, — must I not add, — a wicked, assumption of authority, *to deny to him this distinguishing, this dearly cherished appellative of his Lord and Master.*

In giving a statement, therefore, of the doctrine of Unitarian Christianity, as I cannot repeat to you the articles of any prescribed formulary of faith, distinct from the Bible, I must be understood to speak in my individual capacity, and to state the doctrine, which,

as a sincere Unitarian, I believe the Scriptures to teach, and which I suppose that Unitarians, as a class of Christians, receive as divine truth.

I will give a statement of our belief, in the first place, in relation to God; secondly, in relation to Jesus Christ; and thirdly, in relation to man, — his nature, condition, and prospects.

I. In the first place, we believe that there is *one God*, and *one only;* — that God is *one person*, in the proper sense of that term, — *one being, one spirit, one intelligent agent*, and *one only*. That is, we believe in God's strict *personal unity*. This is our leading article of faith. Whoever believes this may be called a Unitarian. *A Unitarian* means *a believer in the strict personal unity of God*, that God is *one being*, or *one person only*. This appears to us to be a very plain and simple proposition, that God is strictly, without any distinctions, divisions, parts, or compositions, strictly *one being*. This truth is so clearly taught in the Scriptures, to say nothing of the evidence for it from the light of nature, it is so repeatedly taught in declarations like these, — "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord;" or, as the Hebrew may be more literally rendered, "Jehovah, our God, Jehovah is one;" — "See now, that I, even I, am he, and there is no God *with me;*" — "I am the first, and I am the last, and *besides me* there is no God;" — "I am Jehovah, and there is *none else*, there is no God *besides me;*" — "I am God, and there is *none like me;*" — "There is *one* God, and there is *none other* but he;" — "There is *none other* God but *one;*" — this great and fundamental truth of God's strict unity is so clearly and emphatically taught in these, and various similar declarations, *which are absolutely exclusive of*

every other person, or every other intelligent agent, that it seems impossible to resist the conviction, that there is *only one being*, or *one person*, who is the *Supreme God*, that is Jehovah, the Almighty, the Father.

Consequently, we feel obliged to reject, as unscriptural, the popular doctrine of the Trinity, which teaches, that, besides the Almighty, or the Father, there are *two other beings*, or *persons, who are each of them Supreme God.* We cannot believe this doctrine, because it appears to us to be so directly contradictory to the above plain and positive declarations of Scripture. We cannot believe it, because we do not find, after searching the Scriptures through and through, that it is any where taught there. To the mind of a person, who had never heard o this doctrine, we are persuaded it would not once occur, as he read the Scriptures. He would not once meet with the *word Trinity*, nor would he find it any where said, that "*there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God;*" nor would he find any such expressions as "*God the Son*," and "*God the Holy Ghost.*" Such ideas, as are suggested by this strange phraseology, we are convinced, would never occur to his mind. The fact appears to be that men first learn this doctrine, not from the Scriptures, but some where else; —they are taught it in childhood, — they learn it from their catechisms, or from the creeds or formularies of the church; and then, when they come to read the Scriptures, they meet with a few passages, which they *make to conform to this doctrine.* Instead of *forming their opinion* at first *by the Scriptures*, they make *the Scriptures conform to this previous opinion.* But if they had not learned this doctrine originally some-

where else, those passages, which seem to them now to imply it, they would perceive are susceptible of some other, and a much more consistent and satisfactory explanation.

If the doctrine of the Trinity were true, it would certainly be taught in Scripture, as it seems to us, with the greatest possible distinctness, particularity, and precision. But it cannot be pretended that it is thus taught. Trinitarians themselves must acknowledge it to be merely *a doctrine of inference.* I presume that no respectable advocate of the doctrine, at the present day, will pretend that it is any where *directly taught*, or, in so many words, *expressed*, in Scripture. The method, which is adopted to prove the Trinity, is the following; — a few passages are produced, which are supposed to imply that Christ is God. Some others are then found, which are thought to teach that the Holy Spirit is a *distinct person*, and also God. The *distinct personality of the Spirit*, however, is generally left *to follow of course.* Now all acknowledge that the Father is God. The Trinitarian, then, supposing that he has proved that the Son and Spirit are each also God — *infers* — what? — that there are *three Gods?* — this would seem to be the necessary inference; — but no; — he infers, from this, that there are *three persons in the Godhead.* It must be admitted then, after all, to be merely a matter of inference; and inference, which has little claim to be regarded as logical. Now it appears to us incredible, that, if this doctrine were true, and constituted a part, and an important part, of our religion, instead of having been clearly and directly taught, it should have been left to be gathered only by *inference*, and this very doubtful and remote, from a few detached passages. No reader of the

Gospel history will say that our Saviour anywhere taught this doctrine. No one of his discourses, as recorded by the Evangelists, contains the slightest allusion to it, nor is it ever mentioned by the Apostles in the discourses they delivered, as recorded in the book of Acts, when they went abroad to preach the religion, and establish the church. This total silence of our Saviour and the Apostles, in reference to the Trinity, in their public preaching, seems irreconcilable with the supposition that it is a doctrine of Christianity. There is another consideration of great importance in this connexion. It is evident, from the New Testament, that the unbelieving Jews, those sharp-sighted enemies of Christianity, were at all times on the alert to attack every objectionable part of the religion. No doctrine, since its introduction, has been viewed by them with greater abhorrence than the Trinity. On account of this, they have since reproached Christians with polytheism and idolatry. Yet not one word is to be found in the New Testament of any such objection; not the least trace of any controversy, respecting this doctrine, between the unbelieving Jews and our Saviour, or between them and the Apostles. Nothing could be more unaccountable than this, on the supposition that it was originally taught as a part of Christianity.

But we have other great objections to this doctrine. It appears to be directly contradictory in itself. It teaches that there are *three persons, each of whom is God*, and, at the same time, affirms that there is *but one God*. This seems to us impossible. *Three persons*, that is, *three beings, each of whom is God*, must make *three Gods*. Nothing can be plainer than this. Is not a *person* a *being?* Are not *three persons* the same as *three beings?* And is it

possible to conceive of any difference between three *persons*, each of whom is God, — three *beings*, each of whom is God, — and three *Gods?* The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are said to be *three persons*, wholly distinct from each other; possessing separate wills, consciousness, and perceptions; performing different and distinct offices in man's salvation, neither doing the work of the other; — each spoken of as a *person, in the proper sense of the term,* — being referred to by the pronouns denoting *proper personality;* — each having ascribed to him *personal attributes, personal relations,* and *personal actions;* and each possessed of all the attributes and perfections of Supreme Divinity. Can any thing more be wanting to constitute three distinct Gods? Yet this doctrine, at the same time, maintains that there is but *one.* — Can this be possible? Constituted as is the human understanding, nothing can appear more directly contradictory and incredible. We cannot, therefore, believe the Trinity; because Scripture teaches us that there is but *one God,* and because it is impossible that there should be *three,* and at the same time but *one.*

It appears to us, moreover, that a belief in this doctrine tends to make the Scriptures contradict themselves; — to obscure and perplex our ideas of God; — to confuse and distract the mind in the act of worship; — to expose our religion to the attacks of the deist and infidel; — and to present the greatest obstacle to the conversion of the heathen, and the further extension of the knowledge of Christianity.

We believe, then, with the Apostle, that "there is none other God but one; for though there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth, — to us there is but

one God, the Father, of whom are all things." Him, and him only, we believe to be possessed of infinite perfections, or the attributes of Supreme Divinity. We believe that his character, the relation he sustains to his creatures, and the disposition with which he regards them, are best expressed when we call him OUR FATHER. We cannot believe that he is *clothed in wrath*, or that he looks down with hatred or displeasure upon the creatures he has made; — for the Bible assures us that "God is love;" — that he "is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;" — that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

We believe, moreover, that the *Holy Ghost*, or the *Holy Spirit*, is the *Spirit of God;* — not *a distinct being or person*, but the *Spirit of God* himself; — for God is a Spirit. In Scripture, the expression is commonly used to denote a *divine influence* or *energy*, — the *work or operation of God.* That the Holy Spirit, as spoken of in Scripture, is not a distinct person, seems plain from the *expressions* which are applied to it. It is said to be *poured out*, *shed forth*, and *shed abundantly;* it is called a *gift*, and said to be *given by measure*, which shows that the gift might be imparted in various *degrees* or *portions*, — Christians are said to *receive* it, to be *baptized* and *anointed* with it, to *drink into* it, and to be *filled with* it, or *full of* it. By these expressions the idea of *personality* seems to be entirely excluded. Paul writes to the Thessalonians not to *quench* it. Such expressions are not applicable to a *person.* The language of Scripture seems clearly to imply that it is a supernatural influence imparted by God.

II. In the second place, we believe that Jesus Christ is the SON OF GOD; — *not God himself*, — not the *same being*, whose *Son he is*, — but a *distinct* being, *inferior* to him, and *dependent* upon him. Nothing appears to us plainer than this, — that the *Son of God* must be a *distinct being from him whose Son he is*; — and that the very term *Son* expresses *derived existence*, *inferiority*, and *dependence*. This we believe to be the doctrine of the New Testament throughout. Jesus expressly declares, "The Father is greater than I." "The Son can do nothing of himself." "I can, of mine own self, do nothing: as I hear I judge;" "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself:" "The father, which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." He continually speaks of himself as *coming from God*, — as *being sent by* him, — and coming to do, *not his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him. He prays to God.* What can be more evident than that the *act of prayer* implies *dependence?* — We cannot, therefore, believe that Jesus Christ is God, nor that he is *equal* with the Father, for this would contradict his repeated and positive declarations.

But the Trinitarian thinks to evade the force of this statement by the supposition that Christ possessed a *double nature;* and that, though he could do nothing of himself, *as man*, yet, *as God*, he possessed *omnipotence*. This hypothesis, however, affords no relief from the difficulty; for no Trinitarian supposes that Jesus Christ was, in reality, more than *one person*. How many natures, then, soever, he may have had, the personal pronouns, *I*, *me*, and *mine*, in the foregoing passages, must include them all. He then expressly and repeatedly declares that *he*, *the whole*

of his person, including all his natures, is *inferior* to the Father, and *dependent* upon him. His testimony must be absolutely conclusive The question might be rested upon these declarations. But this is not all. Could the supposition of a double nature be made to remove the difficulty, it must be at the expense of the *moral character* of our Saviour. This is a serious and important consideration. Jesus Christ acknowledged that he knew not the time when a certain prediction should be fulfilled. These are his words, — "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, NEITHER THE SON, but the Father." The Trinitarian says, that Christ here refers to his human nature, and means, that, *as man he did not know*, though, *as God, he did*. It may be asked, does not the word *Son* include both of his natures? and does not Jesus Christ, *as the Son*, disclaim a knowledge of the time referred to? and does he not *intend* that his hearers shall so understand him? If, then, he possessed that knowledge which he disclaims, and which he intends that his hearers shall understand him to disclaim, most clearly it will follow, (we cannot escape it,) that he *equivocated*, — that he *intended to deceive*. Is anything more necessary to constitute a falsehood than an intention to deceive? Unitarians have often been accused of *degrading* the character of the Saviour. But who is it that degrades the character of the Saviour? We trust that we entertain more honorable ideas of his exalted and unimpeachable character, than to ascribe to him prevarication and falsehood; for *in his mouth*, we are assured, *there was no guile*.

The doctrine of a double nature in Jesus Christ, we are persuaded, is a *human fiction*. Not the least hint of

such a doctrine has ever been found in Scripture. We ask to be referred to *one passage*, — *one single text*, in any part of Scripture, which says that Christ had two natures, or that he was both God and man. We have seen before, that the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that there are *three persons in one nature;* we now have, by this hypothesis, *two natures* in *one* of these persons. This seems most strange and unintelligible. It seems to be turning the most solemn of all subjects into a riddle. It is idle to pretend that it is all a mystery, and that it is our duty to bow down our understanding to faith. Were there, in reality, any ground for this pretence, the reply would be, 'If this doctrine be a *mystery*, it can form no part of revelation;' for a *revelation*, if there be any meaning in the word, is a *discovery*. Whatever is *revealed* is *discovered*, is *made known*, is made *plain* to our reason and understanding. That which is not *known* or not *understood* can make no part of *revealed religion*. But there is, in truth, no ground for the plea of mystery. The language, if used in its common acceptation, and there is no pretext for saying that it is not, is perfectly intelligible. It is here stated, that one and the same person is both God and man. If any thing be impossible it is this. God is an *infinite*, man a *finite*, being. God is *omnipotent and omniscient*, man is *weak and of imperfect knowledge*. We have a clear and distinct understanding of the meaning of these terms, and we perceive it to be absolutely impossible that one and the same being should be both *infinite* and *finite;* — uncreated, and yet created; — eternal in duration, and yet but of yesterday; — immutable, and yet liable to change; — possessed of omnipotence, and yet able to do nothing of himself; — all-wise, and yet liable

to err. Most assuredly these are impossibilities. The doctrine, therefore, that Christ is both God and man, a doctrine which involves these impossibilities, is self-contradictory and incredible. Every one must perceive it to be so, who understands the terms which are used to express it. Men have deceived themselves. Thousands have imagined they were true believers in this doctrine, when they merely assented to *a form of words*, without affixing to them any clear and definite meaning.

To our understanding, nothing can be further beyond the bounds of credibility, than the proposition that Jesus Christ was God. Had it been true, it seems to us that it must have given a peculiar and most extraordinary character to the whole language of the Gospel history, and been stated with a distinctness and force, which would have precluded the possibility of mistake. But how different is the fact! Take up the Gospel histories, one after the other, and ask yourself if the person, the narrative of whose life you are reading, could possibly have been the Almighty God? Find, if you can, a *single passage* which teaches this. You will not say, that these four independent historians have all omitted to notice the most essential doctrine of Christianity. You surely will not pretend that Jesus Christ himself did not teach the truths of his religion. Here we have recorded at length the instructions he delivered, yet you will search in vain for the place where he teaches his disciples that he is God. Not one instance is to be found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke, in which he is *called* God; and the same is true of John's Gospel, with the exception of the single verse at its commencement, which is susceptible of a very dif-

ferent and a very satisfactory explanation.* Proceed next to the Acts of the Apostles. Here we have the account of their travels and preaching to spread abroad the religion of their master, and establish his Church. Several of their discourses are recorded at length, which treat of the great truths of Christianity, and by which thousands were converted to the faith, yet not one word is dropped respecting the deity of Christ. It seems impossible to resist the conclusion, that the Apostles did not preach, and did not even know, the doctrine.

In fine, you read, in the narratives of the Evangelists, the account of one, who is born into this world as all others are, and is in a state of feeble and helpless infancy; — who grows in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man; — who experiences the common wants of humanity, hunger, and thirst, and weariness; — who discovers the feelings of a man, as he weeps at the grave of his friend Lazarus, and as he mourns at the prospect of the calamities, which are impending over his country; — whose soul is sometimes troubled in anticipation of his sufferings; — who, being in an agony in the garden, *is strengthened* by an angel; — and who, at last, upon the cross, *expires, — suffering death, the common lot of man.*

Now ask yourself, reader, — can any thing be more incredible, than that this person was Almighty God? Were this the fact, it must have been, beyond all comparison, the most stupendous and astonishing event that ever occurred upon our earth. Is it possible to imagine that such a fact as this, — that Jesus Christ was Almighty God, the Creator and Upholder of the universe, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain; — that Jesus Christ

* See note at the end.

was *this Being, clothed in flesh, and living like a man in Judea;* — is it possible to imagine that such a fact as this, which is supposed to lie at the foundation of our religion, instead of bursting forth with overpowering evidence from every part of the New Testament, should have been, at the most, but obscurely hinted, or left to be gathered by doubtful deduction from a few detached passages, or incidental expressions, to be met with principally in the Epistles? Had the Apostles themselves believed that their master was Almighty God incarnate, would it have been possible for them to treat him, and converse with him, with all that ease and familiarity which are every where apparent? — Would Judas have betrayed him? — Would Peter have denied him? Upon his apprehension, would they all have forsaken him and fled? It seems impossible to think it. How would they have spoken of his crucifixion, and the ignominious circumstances attending it! No power of language would have been sufficient to give utterance to their feelings. Yet these are the words, in which the Apostle Peter, on the day of pentecost, addressed the Jews, who had just crucified his master; "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; — Jesus of Nazareth, A MAN *approved of God among you,*" — or, as it should be rendered, '*proved unto you to be* A MAN *from God,*' — "by miracles and wonders, and signs, which *God did by him,* in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, — him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, *whom God hath raised up.*" The conviction seems to us irresistible, that the idea never entered the minds of the Apostles that their master was God.

As Unitarians, then, we believe that *Jesus Christ was the Son of God*, but *not God himself. If this be heresy, we are willing to confess it;* for we are perfectly satisfied that it is Scripture doctrine; — and we think it much better to be accounted *heretics with Scripture upon our side, than orthodox with unscriptural though it be popular theology.*

We believe that Jesus Christ was a messenger from heaven; and that he was commissioned by God to reveal to men the most important truth, — truth, in which their eternal interest was concerned. The Spirit of God was communicated to him without measure. God dwelt in him by his Spirit. His miracles were wrought by the power of God, and his instructions were inspired and delivered by the wisdom of God. He expressly declares,— "*The father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*" "*My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*" "*As my father hath taught me, I speak these things.*" All that our Saviour taught we regard as coming from God, and we devoutly receive it as divine truth. Though we do not believe in the divinity of *his person*, we believe in the divinity of *his mission*, and in the *divinity of the truths which he delivered.* So fully was God manifested in the works and words of Jesus, that it might be said, with no uncommon boldness of figurative expression, that *whoever had seen him had seen the Father.* But we do not pay him divine worship, for this would derogate from the glory and majesty of the Supreme, who is the only true God, and has declared that his glory shall not be given to another, and would be contrary to the command of Jesus, as twice given in the Apocalypse to John, when he fell down to worship at his feet; — "*See thou do it*

not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets; — *worship God.*"

Whatever, therefore, are the views we entertain of the *person* or *rank* of Christ, the *religion which he communicated* remains the same. Its value, — its truth, — its divinity, — are not affected by the rank or nature of the person who has brought it. The *rank* of the messenger does not affect the *message*. When an earthly sovereign gives intelligence to his subjects, it is of no importance whether the communication be made immediately by his own hand, or sent by the hand of his son, or even by the hand of a servant. In either case the intelligence is the same. Its nature and value are not affected. We need only to be assured that the religion which our Saviour taught came from God, and we ask for nothing more; — we yield to it our humble, sincere, and heartfelt faith.

Yet there are some who would say, 'If Jesus Christ were not God, he would be no Saviour for them.' We are shocked at such presumption. We rely, with unshaken trust, upon the belief that any Saviour whom God hath appointed must be sufficient. We should think it impiety to doubt that he, "whom the Father hath *sanctified* and *sent* into the world," is an all-sufficient Saviour.

It is said by very many, to whose shame it must be that they know no better, that we '*deny the Lord who bought us.*' It is true, that we do not believe that Jesus Christ came *to appease the wrath of an incensed Deity*, or LITERALLY *to purchase man's salvation by his blood.* It appears to us to be a most awful and shocking imputation upon the character of God, to suppose that he regarded his creatures with *wrath*, and was to be *appeased* only by

the *sacrifice* and *blood of* HIS INNOCENT SON. We do not admit the strange idea that man's salvation is the result of anything analogous to a *contract*, *bargain* or *sale*, or *price paid*, or that Christ died literally as a *substitute* for sinners, suffering the punishment of their sins imputed to him, while his righteousness is imputed to them. Oh no! no! — Far be such a belief from our creed!

Christ saves us by his religion. He is called our *Saviour*, or, which is the same, our *deliverer*, as he *saves* or *delivers* us from sin and its consequences, by the divine instructions he has given us respecting the character and moral government of God, and our own condition and duty; — by making known to us the terms of pardon and acceptance, and the invitations of his father's love; — by bringing life and immortality to light, and revealing a future righteous retribution; — by holding out to us the most encouraging promises, prospects, and hopes; and by exhibiting in his own life, for our imitation, a pure and perfect example. For the establishment of his religion, — a religion so intimately connected with the eternal interests of men, — so necessary for their deliverance from sin, and their preparation for happiness and heaven, he spared not himself; but, in obedience to duty and the will of his Father, he went on, with a fixed determination of purpose, and laid down his life, and poured out his blood in the cause. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that we might live. It is indeed "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." But the *language*, which is used in Scripture in reference to his death, we believe to be of a *figurative*

character, and to have been borrowed from the Jewish ritual. We should have naturally expected that such an event, as the ignominious crucifixion of their Lord and Master, would take strong possession of the minds of the Apostles, and that they would often speak of it in the strong and glowing language of deep feeling. Such we find to have been the fact. We should also have expected, that, whenever they perceived a resemblance in the Christian dispensation to a part of their old ritual, such was their familiarity with it, its characteristic terms would at once present themselves to their minds and influence their manner of expression. Such we have reason to believe, in reality, was the fact. As Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, or, which is the same, to deliver mankind from sin, and died in the prosecution of the undertaking, nothing could be more natural for a Jew, in speaking of this event, the figure must have been so familiar to his mind, than to say, 'he died *a sacrifice* for us.' Accordingly we find no infrequent recurrence of expressions of this nature; all derived from the same source. The Apostles say, that Christ "*hath given himself* for us, *an offering* and a *sacrifice* to God;" — that our religious blessings were *purchased* by his death; — and that we have been *redeemed* by his blood.* But apart from the influence of the analogies of the Mosaic ritual upon the language of the Apostles in reference to the death of Christ, it cannot appear to us, notwithstand-

* Similar expressions are applied in the Old Testament to the Jews, in reference to their deliverance from Egypt. They are spoken of as *saved*, *bought*, *purchased*, and *redeemed*, and God is called their *Saviour*. See Exod. xiv. 30; xv. 13, 16; Deut. xxxii. 6; 2. Sam. vii. 23.

ing our philosophical precision in the use of language, and studied correctness of phraseology, to be any great extravagance of figure, to speak of this event as the most important *sacrifice* for the best interests of man, and to say that Christ *died* for our sins, — that he *died* that we might *live*, and that our privileges have been *purchased by his blood*. With our ideas of the purpose of the death of Christ, all this language seems extremely natural. Is it not common to apply the same expressions to the sufferings of those, who have been the instruments, in divine providence, of effecting any signal temporal deliverance, or procuring important public blessings? What is more common and natural, than, in speaking of those who have lost their lives in the public service, to say, that 'they *died* for their country?' Do we not say, that the blessings of our independence have been *purchased* by the *blood* of our citizens? and that they, who devoted their lives to procure for us our freedom, *sacrificed themselves* for our benefit? Do we not call him, who was the leader of our armies through the momentous struggle of the revolution, — do we not call him, by way of eminence, the *Saviour of his country?* This language, though figurative, seems extremely natural; and we think it affords us an easy and adequate solution of the import of the terms in which the Apostles speak of the death of Christ, without resorting to the supposition of a *literal sacrifice*, or a *literal purchase* of Gospel privileges by his *blood*, as the *price paid*.

Jesus Christ then saves us by means of his religion; and not by taking our sins upon himself, and suffering the punishment for them in our stead, and thus satisfying divine justice by paying an equivalent. Scripture no

where says that Christ came to *reconcile God to man*, but *man to God*. God has always abounded in compassion. *His grace is offered freely to us all. We are saved by grace.* But that could be no *grace* which had been *purchased by a full equivalent*, — by the *payment of a price.* The love of God, according to the Scriptures, is the *origin* of our salvation. Salvation is his *free gift* But that can be no *gift* which has been *literally bought with a price.* If salvation has been procured by the merits, sufferings, and death of Christ; — if he has hereby satisfied the claims of divine justice, rendered God placable, and thus opened the door for our forgiveness; it must necessarily follow, that Jesus Christ, instead of the *effect*, or the *gift* of God's love, must have been the *original cause* of it. If so, the declaration of our Saviour cannot be true when he says, — " God *so loved* the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son."

What we believe is this. Men had strayed away from God and sinned. God, in compassion, sends his Son to bring the wanderers back. He gives them a religion, which reveals their condition and destination, makes the path of their duty plain, and sets before them the most powerful inducements to virtue. He himself leads the way, and incites them onward by his own example. Thus he reconciles them to his Father, who is waiting to be gracious, and is ready to receive every returning penitent, as the father, in the parable, received his returning prodigal, — to his forgiveness and favor. Such we believe to be the Gospel method of atonement or reconciliation by Jesus Christ.

For our Saviour's obedience unto death, we believe that " God hath highly exalted him, and given him a

name, which is above every name," or, authority superior to every other, "that, at the name of Jesus," in acknowledgment of his authority, "every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This exaltation of Jesus we believe to consist in the universal extension of his spiritual kingdom, or his sovereignty over the hearts of men. But that this spiritual kingdom of our Lord is held by *delegated* authority is evident from the further testimony of the same Apostle; who, speaking of the consummation of all things, says, — "Then cometh the end, when *he*," i. e. Christ, "*shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;* when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; and when all things shall be subdued unto him, *then shall* THE SON ALSO HIMSELF BE SUBJECT UNTO HIM *that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*"

III. Having thus given a statement of our belief respecting God and Christ, I proceed, in the third and last place, to the views we entertain of the nature and condition of man. Scripture and reason seem clearly to teach us that man comes into the world in a state of innocence and purity. We believe that the soul of the little infant can be considered neither *holy* nor *sinful*, but perfectly *innocent* and *pure*, just as God has made it; — like all the rest of his works it must be regarded by him with favor and love; — and, if taken from the world, it must ascend to the bosom of its heavenly Father. As constituted by nature, it is possessed of powers of moral agency, which will afterwards render it a moral and accountable being; — but it can possess neither good nor ill desert, — it can be

neither virtuous nor vicious,— until these powers have been called into exercise. Man is morally accountable, not for the mere *possession* of any powers which nature has given him, but for the *use which he makes of them.* He is accountable, not for *being possessed* by nature of any particular propensities, but for the *use which he makes of his power to regulate them.* Man becomes a moral and accountable agent no sooner than he attains the knowledge of his duty, possesses power to perform it, and finds himself free in its exercise.

There is a plain distinction, which, it appears to us, has been too generally overlooked, between a man's *nature* and his *character.* Man's *nature* is the work of God, — his *character* is of his own formation. His nature is *human nature.* Now, however imperfect this nature may be, there surely can be *no sin in possessing it.* No guilt can attach to man for being created as he is. I feel obliged to express myself distinctly upon this point. To say that man has a *sinful nature,* or, that he is *born a sinner,* is to express a palpable absurdity. It is clearly a self-evident truth, that there can be *no sin in being as we are made,* or in doing what we have no power to avoid. Consider a moment,— what is sin? Sin is the voluntary transgression of a known law. But what law has man transgressed in *being possessed of human nature?* or, in coming into the world as he was created? Every man has powers given him of forming for himself a *moral character,* and it depends entirely upon his own exertions whether this shall be the character of virtue, or the character of vice. Reason, conscience and religion have been given to teach him his interest and duty, to enable him to acquire the character of virtue, and thereby to qualify

himself for the enjoyment of its rewards. The favor of God and the happiness of heaven, we believe, are offered to all, without partiality or exception, who will improve, to the best of their abilities, that portion of light which God has given them. The rewards of heaven, we think, will be proportioned to the degree of virtue which is here attained; and the degree of virtue, which any one is able to attain, will depend upon the religious advantages he has enjoyed, and the fidelity with which he has improved them.

Consequently, we feel obliged to reject, as unscriptural and irrational, the doctrine, more commonly received, that man, in consequence of the sin of Adam, comes into the world with a nature *totally depraved;* — that he is *born a sinner*, wholly averse from all good, and wholly inclined to all evil; — that, while he remains in this natural state, he is an object of the displeasure, nay, *of the wrath and curse of God;* — that he is utterly unable to do any thing to obtain the divine favor and acceptance, unable to think a good thought, or perform a good action, and without power to deliver himself from this fallen and sinful estate; — but, — that God, having foreseen, from all eternity, that such would be the deplorable and helpless condition of man, was pleased, of his free grace, to elect a certain number out of the common ruin, without any reference to their characters, or, as commonly expressed, "without any foresight of faith, good works, or any condition performed by the creature," whom he determined, in his own time, effectually to call by his word and spirit, and their corrupt natures to renew by the influence of irresistible grace; but, that "the rest of mankind," not being subjects of his unconditional election, "God was

pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain to dishonor and wrath for their sins;" — or for possessing the nature which he had given them, and remaining in the condition in which he had placed them, and from which they had no power to deliver themselves; — and all "to the praise of his glorious justice."

Such views of the nature and condition of man, we are convinced, are as contrary to Scripture, as they are to reason. They seem revolting to the best feelings of the soul, and every honorable conception of the character of God, and, in the highest degree, pernicious and immoral in their practical tendency. Nothing appears to us more directly at variance with the uniform tenor of Scripture, and the entire spirit of our religion, than the doctrine of *imputation*, or, that the sins of one may be charged to the account of another. The *natural consequences* of sin may be and often are transmitted from father to son, but the *moral* consequences — *never*. The sins of a father may bring suffering and distress upon his family and his descendants even for many generations; but, in the government of a righteous Being, they will not be held accountable nor punished for his transgressions. In like manner, we have no disposition to deny, that the transgression of the head of the human family may have entailed upon his posterity, *mortality* and *all its attendant ills*. The trials, temptations, and dangers, to which man is exposed in consequence, we believe to be greater; but God imputes the sin of Adam to none of his posterity, nor will he require of any what they are unable to perform. The word of the Lord has expressly declared by the mouth of his

prophet, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Every one shall be accountable for his personal transgressions only. To be convinced that man is not born a sinner, with a nature totally depraved, and under the wrath and curse of God, we need look no further than to the words of our Saviour, when he took little children in his arms, and said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven;" — "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" — and "it is not the will of your father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." With these words of our Saviour before us, it seems unaccountable how any Christians can imagine that infant souls are stained with deep and deadly depravity. It appears to us a most awful and shocking thought. Oh, no! If our Saviour's language be not destitute of meaning, they are perfectly innocent and pure, and, "in heaven, their angels do always behold the face of his Father."

In the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the favor of God and the happiness of heaven are offered freely to all, who will comply with the conditions of repentance, reformation, and sincere obedience. These conditions we are persuaded that all, without exception, have power to perform. This ability of man is implied in all the exhortations to repentance and obedience, in all the warnings, and in all the threatenings, with which the Scriptures are *filled*, and which are addressed to mankind universally. This is the commandment of Jehovah, — "*Repent and turn your-*

selves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. *Cast away* from you all your transgressions, and *make you a new heart and a new spirit;* for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "*Turn yourselves*, and live ye." Paul preached to the Jews and Gentiles, "that they should repent, and *turn* to God, and *do works* meet for repentance." What can possibly be the meaning of all this language, if we have no power to repent, and to turn ourselves from our transgressions? Can we suppose that God would thus mock at our weakness? — that he would insult the depraved and helpless condition in which he himself has placed us? Such are the conceptions we entertain of the character of our heavenly Father, as will not allow us to suppose, for a moment, that he could command us to do what he knows to be beyond our power; or tantalize our hopes by the offer of final happiness, upon conditions which he knows it is impossible for us to perform.

We cannot, therefore, believe this doctrine of the innate depravity and moral inability of man, nor the kindred doctrine of arbitrary and unconditional election, because they appear to us most clearly repugnant to the language of Scripture, and the whole spirit of our religion; — because they are contradictory to the plainest dictates of reason, and the teachings of the natural world; — because they make God to be the author of sin, and convert his paternal administration into an unjust and arbitrary tyranny; — and because they chill the benevolent feelings of the soul, and totally discourage all virtuous exertions.

We believe that the favor of God and the happiness of heaven are offered to us all upon the performance of conditions; and it is only in compliance with the terms thus

prescribed that we can obtain the character of Christian virtue. Moral character cannot be *bestowed* upon us; — virtue cannot be *given* to us; — it must be our own *acquisition.* If there be a self-evident truth in the whole compass of moral science, it is this; and it becomes us to be exceedingly cautious, lest the traditions of a popular, but, as we are persuaded, a false theology should rob us of this truth. The conditions of obtaining the divine favor *we are able to perform;* — with the terms of the Gospel *we can comply;* and, if we have not that character of virtue and piety, which the Gospel was given to enable us to acquire, or to form for ourselves, it is our own fault, — the sin will lie at our own doors; — we cannot charge it to the account of our Creator, nor excuse ourselves by throwing the blame upon our corrupt and depraved natures.

All observation and experience unite with revelation in teaching us, that our present condition was intended for our discipline and moral improvement. This world we regard as a place of education, where God is training us by trials and temptations, and by the means of moral and religious instruction, to virtue, to happiness, and to heaven. And it is the overwhelming evidence of this, which meets us on every side, that is another reason to oblige us to reject the doctrine of the innate depravity and moral inability of man; and also that of God's arbitrary and unconditional election.

For the same reason, also, we feel obliged to reject the doctrine, which teaches that there is no retribution beyond the grave. From observation and experience it appears that virtue is but imperfectly rewarded in the present life, and that vice also is punished but in part. The

goods and evils of life seem to be bestowed without discrimination of character. To the trials, the temptations, the dangers, and the sufferings of the world, all, — both the good and the bad, — are equally exposed. God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." In the present life, we see, indeed, that a righteous moral government is commenced. But the indiscriminate distribution of good and evil shows that this government is not here carried to completion, but has prospective reference to another state. Conscience also, the natural monitress and judge, whose province it is to reward the good man and reprove the bad, is often, alas! dethroned by sin, and bereft of all her sensibility and power. They, whose consciences are in this condition, are spoken of in Scripture, as "*dead* in trespasses and sins." Their consciences are said to be "*seared* with a hot iron." How then can it be supposed, wretched indeed as is this condition of moral insensibility, that they receive the full punishment of their sins here; — and, without having practised virtue, — without any perception of its beauty, utility, and intrinsic worth, — without any taste for its joys, — the moral principle impaired, and all the finer sensibilities of the soul destroyed, — they are, at once, discharged by death of their burden of sin, and made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!"

As moral character cannot be *bestowed*, so neither can it be *taken away*. No power, either in heaven or on earth, can deprive the good man of the testimony of his conscience, or remove from the sinner, without his repentance, the consciousness of guilt. Virtue and happiness, on the one hand, and vice and misery, on the other, are insepa-

rably conjoined in the constitution of man's moral nature. Whatever may be the changes that take place at death, we cannot conceive it to be possible for the moral character of the soul to be separated from the soul itself. Goodness and sin, virtue and vice, are not *things*, which can have a *separate and independent existence*, but *qualities, which imply something to which they belong*, — *qualities inherent in a moral agent.* Neither the one nor the other can any more be separated from the soul that possesses it, than the property of form or extension can be separated from matter.

Believing, then, that the moral government of God, though commenced in the present life, is not here carried to completion; — being convinced, from the testimony of reason, of nature, and of Scripture, that the present life is a state of trial, probation, and moral discipline, preparatory to another; — and conceiving it to be impossible for virtue and happiness, or for vice and misery, to be separated from each other, — or for the character of the soul to be separated from the soul itself; — we feel obliged to reject the doctrine that there is no retribution beyond the grave. We believe that "the hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they, who have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they, who have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation." "Then," we believe, "he shall reward every man according to his works." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Beyond this we dare not go. The light of revelation conducts no further. Though reason might

lead us to conclude, from the character of God, and the nature and design of punishment under a paternal administration, that his gracious purpose will be ultimately accomplished in the restoration, from sin and misery to holiness and happiness, of all mankind; — YET, we are able to discover, in Scripture, no intimation of any probation or state of discipline beyond the grave.

I have now given, as I proposed, a general statement of our views of religion, or, of the principal doctrines of Christianity, as I suppose them to be understood by Unitarians. I have stated our belief; first, in regard to God, — his personal unity, and his paternal character; —secondly, in regard to Jesus Christ, — his nature and person, the design of his mission, and the purposes of his death; — and thirdly, in regard to man, — his natural state, his moral nature, his moral condition, and his prospects for futurity.

Reader; — you may now be able for yourself to judge with how much propriety Unitarianism is denominated a *new doctrine;* and whether it deserves to be considered as a modern and unwarranted innovation Does it not recommend itself to your unbiassed understanding? Does it not conform to the plain teachings of Scripture? Was it not the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the Apostles? Instead of a *new doctrine*, we believe, in the sincerity of our souls, that *it is the doctrine of* PURE AND GENUINE CHRISTIANITY.

As such, we are free to confess, that we desire and pray for its wide extension. We believe Unitarianism to be, beyond all comparison, more honorable to God than the system, which is commonly, though falsely, called orthodox; — more ennobling to the human soul; — more

encouraging to virtuous exertion; and more conducive to the interests of true religion and practical piety. May we all experience how rich are its joys! — how precious are its promises! — how inexhaustible are its consolations! Through honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report, if we have this faith, we can wish for nothing more. In this faith we hope to live; and in this faith we shall think it our happiness to die. May God grant the smiles of his favor upon the cause of uncorrupt Christianity, — of pure and undefiled religion; and crown with success the efforts which may be made to spread its knowledge and heavenly influence throughout the world!

NOTE.

Brief explanation of the texts, which have been relied upon to prove the Deity of Christ.

These texts may all be reduced to four classes.

1. The first comprises those which have been *Interpolated* or *corrupted.*

The text of the Greek Testament, which was prepared by the celebrated J. J. Griesbach, from a laborious comparison of more than three hundred and fifty Greek Manuscripts, has claims unsurpassed by any other, to be received as the standard and genuine text.

Now, be it remembered, that *Griesbach was a Trinitarian;* and has set aside, from the text of his Testament, three passages,

which have been in times past, among the main supports of the Trinity. These are the following; 1. John, v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." Acts, xx. 28. "Feed the church of GOD, which he hath purchased with his own blood." 1. Tim. iii. 16. "Great is the mystery of godliness; GOD was manifest in the flesh." The first of these texts Griesbach rejects entirely, *as it is not contained in any of the Greek MSS.*, with the exception of one very modern, and of no authority, as it was copied from the Latin Version. Those Trinitarian writers themselves who are most competent to form a judgment, acknowledge that this text is "*indisputably spurious.*" In the second of the above passages, the word "GOD" has been substituted, without authority, for "*Lord*," which was the original reading. In Griesbach's text, it reads — "the church of the *Lord.*" In the third passage, instead of "*God* was manifest in the flesh," the true and original reading, according to the same authority, was thus — "*he, who* was manifest in the flesh, was justified," &c. These three passages, therefore, are given up by Trinitarians themselves. No respectable writer at the present day would presume to quote them as a part of genuine Scripture.

To the above passages should be added Rev. i. 8. which, according to Griesbach, should stand thus; — "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the LORD GOD, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." In the 11th verse Griesbach rejects entirely the words, — "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

2. To the second class of passages may be referred those, which relate to God, but have been incorrectly applied to Christ. John, xx. 28, the exclamation of Thomas to Christ, "My Lord and my God!" The first expression was probably addressed to Jesus, in acknowledgment of his real presence, and the last, *my God!* seems to have been a pious ejaculation, which involuntarily burst forth from a mind before incredulous, but now suddenly overwhelmed with astonishment at this display of Almighty power in raising Christ from the dead.

Rom. ix. 5. "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." This may be understood as an ascription of praise to God. *God be blessed*, or *blessed be God*, forever!

Heb. i. 8. "But unto the son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." This passage is quoted from Ps. xlv. 6. and was there addressed to Solomon. In both places we believe it should be rendered thus, *God is thy throne, for ever and ever.* A similar construction of the original occurs in Ps. lxxiii. 26. "God is my portion for ever." The verses which follow, Heb. i. 10 — 12, are quoted from Ps. cii. 25 — 27, and in both places are addressed directly to God. In 1. John, iii. 16, it will be seen that the words "*of God*" are in italics. All such were added by king James's translators. They are not in the original. 1. John, v. 20. "This is the true God and eternal life." *This* refers to God, spoken of immediately before, as "*him that is true.*"

3. The third class includes those passages, in which divine names, attributes, works and worship are supposed to be ascribed to Christ. John, i. 1. "The word was God." By "*the word,*" is probably to be understood an attribute of God, either his wisdom, or power, or else both of these attributes together, which some heretics of the apostle's time maintained to be a distinct being from God and eternal with him. The apostle here argues that this is not a distinct being from God, but merely his *attribute*, not to be separated from him; — it is in fact God himself. As striking a personification of the divine attribute of *wisdom* is found in Prov. viii. particularly 22 — 30. When in the 14th vs. it is said, "the word was made flesh," I suppose the meaning to be, that "the wisdom of God was remarkably manifested in Jesus Christ." If there be any passage, in which Christ is called God, I believe it is in an inferior sense. See Ps. lxxxii. 6; John, x. 34. Moses is called a God. Exod. vii. 1. I do not think, however, there is any such passage.

Is. ix. 6. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father." It is not said that the person alluded to *shall be* the mighty God, but that his *name shall be called* so. The same applies to Matt. i. 23. "They *shall call his name Emanuel,*" i. e. "*God with us.*" Nothing was more common among the Jews than to give to children names significant of some remarkable circumstance of birth or destiny. Thus *Eli* means *my God; Eliab, God my father; Elihu, my God himself; Elijah, God the Lord*; *Lemuel, God with them.* But I believe the text should be translated thus; *His name shall be called wonderful, counsellor of God,* (or *divine counsellor,*) *mighty, father of the*

everlasting age, or of the age or dispensation to come; referring to the Christian Dispensation, which is to endure through all time, and of which Christ is represented as "the author and finisher," "the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Heb. xii. 2; Rev. xxii. 13.

Some passages have been supposed to ascribe *divine attributes and works* to Christ. The language I believe to be figurative. Paul says of himself, "I can do all things." Phil. iv. 3. John, says to Christians in general, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and *know all things*" 1. John, ii 20. These are examples of *universal propositions*, which are not to be understood in the *full extent* of their signification. The *works of creation* ascribed to Christ, were works not of the *natural* but of the *moral* creation. "If any man be in Christ he is a *new creature*." In him "all things have become new." 2. Cor. v. 17.

Divine worship is thought to have been paid to Christ. The original word, however, means merely *homage*, *respect*, or *obeisance*, as in 1. Chron. xxix. 20. "All the congregation bowed down their heads, and *worshipped the Lord and the King*."

4. To the fourth class of passages may be referred those, which have been *mistranslated* and *misunderstood*. Phil. ii. 5—8. The common translation says that Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Probably the true sense of the original may be more fully expressed thus; — "Let the same dispositions (of humility and benevolence) be in you, which were in Jesus Christ; who, being the image of God, did not think his likeness to God a thing to be eagerly retained, but lowered himself, and took the appearance of a servant, and became like men; and, being in the common condition of a man, he humbled himself, and submitted to death, even the death of the cross." — (Prof. Norton.) John, x. 30. "I and my Father are one." This means *one in counsel* or *intention*, i. e. have the *same mind*. This appears from John, xvii. 20 — 22.

To most of the above passages Trinitarians, of course, would give a different explanation. How then shall common Christians decide between them? This is the rule: 'Of two interpretations of a passage, which seems to be doubtful, *that one* should be adopted as the *true* interpretation, *which best agrees with the current language and uniform tenor of the Scriptures*."

F. C. Boy

1st Series. No. 187.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF

REV. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, D. D.

OCTOBER 7, 1842.

By Rev. EZRA S. GANNETT.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

February, 1843.

Price 4 Cents.

NOTE.

The Committee of the American Unitarian Association having expressed a wish to include this Address, originally published by request of the Federal Street Congregational Society, among their Tracts, it is now reprinted, with one or two slight alterations, and with the introduction of a single paragraph from a sermon preached by the author on the Sunday after the delivery of the Address, in which the beautiful and Christian character of Dr. Channing's death is noticed more fully than it had been previously. It seemed as if, in the more permanent form which the discourse now assumes, this example of the serenity and piety, of which our faith may be the support in the last hours of life, should be placed prominently before the reader, although it involved the necessity of some repetition.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER,
2 School Street.

ADDRESS.

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." — Such were the words of Jesus, when talking with one whose heart was well-nigh broken by recent and heavy affliction. She had addressed him in terms of reproach, for his absence from the death-bed of his friend. He spoke to her of the life before which death is powerless, and of the faith which composes the mind under bereavement. His discourse was with her, but his language assumed that form of expression which gave it a prophetic meaning for all future ages. And now, unseen, but present in the influences of his Gospel within this house, — as he was present, though unseen, in the same influences within the apartment where the spirit unbound its fellowship with that lifeless frame, — I hear him say, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Beneath such a voice I feel the emotions of grief which convulse the bosom subside into the calmness of a faith, which pierces the visible changes of death and seizes on the reality of an immortal life.

Our friend was one in whom the declaration of the Saviour found its fulfilment. And great as is our sorrow at his departure from us, the indulgence of this sorrow is not the way to express the influence which he had acquired over our hearts. I dare not fix your thoughts upon the magnitude of our loss; for this would betray a forgetfulness of the lessons which he labored to communicate, and so far would dishonor his sacred memory. Our sense of loss, besides, is too deep for words. I could utter it but in broken expressions; you could respond but in choking sighs. To those who filled the circle of his domestic love, may the consolations which God giveth them who seek the shelter of his grace be abundantly granted. To those who, beyond that circle, yet enjoyed the intimacy which bound his to kindred minds, who travelled with him the paths of high thought and holy sentiment and generous endeavor, the recollection of past privilege will carry an antidote to its own infliction of pain. But not on them alone, nor on the members of the Christian society into whose house of prayer his form, that has so often seemed here to borrow from the inward nature a portion of its spiritual energy, has now been brought insensible, yet beautiful, as if the tranquillity of holy thought still moulded that brow; nor on this congregation, from all the departments of social life though it have been gathered; but upon this whole community, upon our land through its vast extent, upon the world, and upon future generations, has this loss fallen. Wherever the wants of humanity are felt, or its interests need or shall hereafter need to be expounded by the clear understanding, or advocated by the eloquent tongue, wherever freedom might seek to bestow its blessings, or

religion to diffuse its power, or Christianity to offer its counsel and sympathy, there will his removal, whose days, if they had been prolonged, would have been devoted, (as they were ever given whilst he lived among us) to the service of freedom, of religion, of Christianity, bring an actual diminution of the influences that might have been made to bear on the regeneration or the advancement of mankind. It is not this city, nor New England alone, that must feel his death as an immeasurable calamity. Our republic has lost one of its most enlightened and faithful citizens; strong and fearless, yet calm and hopeful, in the defence of justice and the principles of well-ordered liberty. Across the ocean thousands of hearts will lament, as for one whom they hailed as an instructer, or a fellow-laborer. The cause of truth and virtue and piety has lost him who stood foremost in vindicating its claims upon man and society. The church of Christ has lost a teacher whose words sank into men's hearts with a power to convince and persuade, whose soul burned with a desire to unfold the revelations of Divine love which neither changeful circumstances nor personal infirmity could abate, and whose character reflected from its equal surface, resting on the deep principles of its formation, the truths which his lips commended. The age has lost one of its brightest lights, the world one of its true benefactors. And all this we feel, and are made to feel, as we observe these funeral rites. Still on this we must not dwell. Other thoughts should lift our minds into a serener atmosphere than that of grief. It is not on death that we should meditate, when the spectacle before us is not so much of death as of life. As I think of him whose image now fills

the plane of mental vision, I see him not as insensible, inactive, as separated from the highest interests of human consciousness and action. He rises before me as one whose existence is informed and immortalized by the sentiment which was announced by the Prince of life — "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." His life on earth was a part of his immortal life; and death has only helped to make more distinct the life that was in him, and to show how indestructible were its elements. On that imperishable life, which manifested itself through the perishable connections of the flesh, it becomes us to ponder; that while we trace its character, we may at once pay the only worthy tribute of gratitude for the impression he made on us, and may comfort, strengthen, and instruct ourselves.

Although of that life I cannot speak as I ought or would, my connexion with this place makes it proper for me to direct your thoughts, if possible, towards a right use of our bereavement. That use is to be found in a quickened sensibility to the great purposes for which he lived, and these purposes can be learned only through an attempt to understand his life — the life which made him what he was on earth, and what he now is where our faith only can follow him.

Of his outward life, the existence which is described in dates and facts, a few words will suffice. He was born at Newport, in Rhode Island, on the seventh of April, 1780. Of the influences exerted on his mind through the impressible years of childhood and youth they can judge, who were acquainted, as were many of us, with her whose rare strength of character must have given to her maternal discipline a power seldom obtained

even in this nearest of relations. The tender reverence with which he regarded that mother in subsequent years was a proof, not only of the depth of his affections, but of the strength of the filial sentiment she had inspired. Even in his boyhood he is said to have exhibited the earnest, though cheerful thoughtfulness, and the strict regard to truth, both in word and action, which marked him in later years. After preparation, which was completed at an early age, he entered the college at Cambridge, whence he graduated in 1798, bearing with him the highest honors of the institution, and having distinguished himself by his habits of diligence and his blamelessness of deportment, as well as by the indications of great natural endowment. Upon finishing his collegiate course he accepted an invitation to reside a year with a gentleman in Virginia, as the instructer of his children. He there probably laid the foundation of that feebleness of constitution and liability to disease, which continued through the rest of his life. His mind early selected the ministry as the scene of his future studies and labors; and after his return from the South he pursued the necessary preparation, the result of which was a style of address that at once drew attention to him as a preacher. The pulpit of the society worshipping on this spot being then vacant, he was heard with an interest which induced them to invite him to become their minister. * His compliance with their request, as I have been told, resulted in part from the conviction that his state of health would permit him better to carry out his views of ministerial fidelity with a

* Dr. Channing was ordained over the Federal Street Church and Society, in Boston, June 1, 1803.

small congregation, as this was, than with one much larger, with which he might have been connected. The increase of the society was an immediate consequence of his connexion with it, and his health for a short time proved itself sufficient for the demands of his office. But it was not long before the delicacy of his system justified the anxieties, which were never afterwards allowed wholly to subside. He continued, however, in the assiduous discharge of his professional duties; the congregation became numerous, a new house of worship was erected, his usefulness widened, his influence in the community became more extensive and important, the University where he had pursued his academical studies called him to a seat among her instructers, and to a participation in the direction of her affairs, the theological controversy, which ended in the dissolution of that union in which the Congregational churches of this Commonwealth had walked for nearly two centuries, found him ready to use his pen in support of what he considered the doctrines of a rational and scriptural faith, and the interests of religion seemed more and more to lean on his arm, when the necessity of a voyage to Europe for the benefit of his health removed him for a season from this sphere of exertion. He probably derived permanent benefit from this absence, but still there was such an habitual want of vigor in his system, that soon after his return he desired an assistant in his ministry; and a colleague was settled in 1824. From that time he continued to officiate in the pulpit with more or less frequency, as his strength permitted, till 1840, when he requested the society to release him from all obligation of professional service, though he desired to retain the pastoral connexion towards them.

As his mind was relieved from the pressure of ministerial engagement, his attention was more and more given to the aspects which society, in its opinions, usages, and institutions, presents to the Christian philanthropist. He was led by his interest in these subjects to communicate to the public, at different times, his thoughts on questions of immediate urgency, involving high moral considerations, and devoted a large part of his time to an examination of the light which Christianity throws upon practical ethics. The summer he always spent in the country, amidst those influences of nature which he esteemed as even more grateful in their effect upon the mind than on the body; and the past season he chose his residence among the mountains that traverse the western section of our State, in whose beautiful seclusion he found a high degree of enjoyment, and a firmer tone of health than he had for a long time possessed. On his journey homeward, by way of Vermont, he was exposed to a temperature unusual at the season, and too severe for him to encounter with impunity; which produced an access of disease, that prevented his proceeding beyond Bennington. Here his illness steadily advanced till it overpowered the vital energy, and what at first were the slight apprehensions of his friends were converted into anxious fears that only gave place to the sorrows of bereavement. He observed the progress of his disease with the calmness that was habitual with him in every situation, expressed a sense of the Divine love even beyond what he had before felt, manifested that exquisite tenderness of affection which gave such beauty to his private life, spoke earnestly of the truth and worth of Christianity, and its certain prevalence over the errors and sins of the world; and thus meeting death, not as one who is taken by surprise, nor

as one unprepared for the change it makes in human condition, but as one in whom the religion of Jesus Christ has built up a consciousness of immortal life that cannot be shaken by the decay of the body, he sank away from his connexion with the earth, as the sun, towards which he turned his closing eyes, was disappearing behind the light which it shed upon the surrounding sky, on the evening of that day which is dearest to the Christian heart, the day sacred to the remembrance of him who is "the resurrection and the life."*

Within the limits to which the present occasion confines us we cannot even glance at all that belonged to the higher life, which we now proceed to contemplate. The most rapid sketch of the various excellence which was seen in him, of the aims which he pursued, and the services which he rendered to the Church and to society, would occupy much more time than can now be granted for this duty. Hereafter it should be undertaken by some one whose acquaintance and sympathy with the character he may attempt to describe, would enable him to surmount the difficulty of speaking in fit terms of the rare combination of gifts and virtues which was found in Dr. Channing. Let us use the few moments that we may now command, in seizing upon the prominent features of his excellence.

Of his mental constitution less need be said, because, judging as he judged, intellectual endowments are of far less moment than the spiritual energy which is evolved from the soul. Genius indeed he considered a gift from the Creator, for which the world on whose account it is bestowed, as well as its possessor, should be thankful;

* Dr. Channing expired on Sunday, October 2, 1842.

and those powers of mind which flow from "the inspiration of the Almighty" he possessed in an unusual degree. Still they did not constitute his chief claim to respect, nor did they in his case, I conceive, belong to the very highest order of (mere) intellectual consciousness. His mental constitution was not without its defects. His intellectual greatness was more the effect o rigid self-discipline than of even the superior abilities which manifested themselves in his youth. Those patient yet rapid exercises of thought, those clear and stern habits of reflection, those acute powers of analysis, which disentangled the essential from the incidental in whatever came under his study, were the result of diligent training which he imposed upon himself in the earlier stages of his mental growth, and never afterwards relinquished. One property, however, of his original constitution ought not to be overlooked — his love of the beautiful, in nature and in art; for this was not only an element which responded to every call made upon it, but it gave a delicacy to his conceptions and a polish to his discourse, that added a peculiar charm alike to his conversation and his writings. No one perhaps ever enjoyed God's workmanship in the evanescent forms of beauty that clothe the earth or the skies, more than he; and few studied with a higher relish or a more accurate taste the productions of human genius. Still his greatness was of the soul rather than of the intellect. He was great, because he lived greatly. Yet it may be doubted whether this fact was recognised as it should have been. Such was the splendor thrown around his name by his intellectual productions, that his moral preëminence, the spiritual beauty which belonged to him, did not obtain its

due appreciation beyond the circle of his nearest friends; although these productions, properly understood, must inspire reverence for the majesty of soul which they disclose, even more than admiration for the brilliancy of genius which shines through them.

His spiritual attainments also were the fruits of his own industry. Self-culture was with him a word of large and authoritative meaning. He early commenced that work which was never suspended — to make himself a perfect man in Christ Jesus. In his youth, as it has been told me, he was of a somewhat impatient temper; but those who knew him only in the period of middle life, find it difficult to believe that he was not naturally of a gentle mood, — so successful was the control which he had established over himself, till it had ceased to be an effort of the will and had become a habit of the heart. With similar fidelity — and may we not say, with equal success — did he labor to bring every propensity and capacity, and even every thought to the obedience of Christ. To the tenderest affections, the gift of nature, he united a sweetness of disposition that made him an object of the most confiding love. There was nothing harsh in his temper, nor artificial in his manners, for both were formed on the model of the Friend of man. So free was he from effort or display, so true to himself, that a stranger might sometimes impute to him coldness or abstraction; but of his gentleness of spirit they who saw him daily could bear witness, and of his uniform kindness, if there were no others to testify, I could speak through eighteen years of a peculiar connexion. Singularly diffident of his own merits when he assumed the office of a public teacher, the tone of decis-

ion with which he afterwards spake arose from his sense of the momentous nature of truth, and not from confidence in himself. The seriousness which often tempered his habitual cheerfulness was the result of meditation on the great themes and responsibilities of life. With the Apostle, he judged that he had "not yet attained nor was already perfect," but ever "pressed on towards the mark of the prize of his high calling." None placed that mark at a higher point, or bent their efforts more strenuously to reach it. Humble and docile, eager to learn and ready to practise whatever might be discovered of God's will, he sought "to fulfil all righteousness," whether in his relations towards God or man. That he was free from imperfection or fault, it would be idle and sinful panegyric to assert. But that he chose perfection as his aim and directed to it his aspirations and efforts, is a truth which must have been felt by all who observed his course.

I have noticed this fidelity of self-culture first among the traits of Dr. Channing's character, not only because it laid the foundation of his other virtues, but because we are apt, when a great mind passes away, to ascribe its superiority to nature rather than to discipline. It was in him, (if it be not always,) the great life which made the great mind. His intellect was clear and comprehensive, because he loved the truth and followed after righteousness. His mind acted forcibly, because it acted freely, without the hindrance of ambition or self-love.

In pursuing this culture of his own nature Dr. Channing vindicated for himself, as he always allowed to others and maintained on their behalf, the rights of intellectual and spiritual liberty with which he held that every

man is endowed by the Creator. His devotion to freedom was of the purest and most ardent kind — to the largest and loftiest freedom. Slavery in every form he scorned, abhorred, and exposed. He was the champion of human rights — the rights of free thought and free speech, of self-government and self-improvement. He stood by the Protestant principle of private judgment, and defended it against theological violence. He stood by the charter which God gave to man at his birth, and maintained its validity against usage and worldly interest. In his devotion to this cause he was consistent through his whole life. As different kinds of oppression attracted his notice, he uttered the scorching tones of rebuke and proclaimed the everlasting principles of justice in the ear of prejudice or power. He thought not of personal consequences, he cared not for fame, he was willing to incur reproach or sacrifice friendship, if he might but loosen the chains by which a human being was unrighteously bound, or might weaken the despotism of public opinion. It was a sublime sight, to behold him jeoparding the estimation in which he was held in this community rather than be silent on what he considered the errors and the duties of his countrymen. Whatever may be thought of the soundness of the views which he advanced, no one can refuse his admiration at the spectacle of moral courage, disinterestedness, and loyalty to solemn convictions which was presented by the course which he took. So jealous of any interference with the liberty of thought was this great assertor of the rights of man, that he preferred a latitude of speculation in which might originate serious error, to even a tacit encouragement of the far greater evil of subjection to an authority thrusting itself between the mind and its Author. And so fearful was

he of being himself "entangled with the yoke of bondage," that he avoided connexion with many of the philanthropic associations of the day; and with the increase of his years, while his bosom glowed with an increasing interest in the cause of truth, his disinclination to act with any party in church or state, with any sect in theology or morals, became more and more decisive. He would neither follow, nor lead a party. It was his office, as he interpreted the guidance of the spirit within him, to unfold to his fellow-men the ideas with which his own secret life was occupied. He was accustomed to style them "*great* truths," for, through the distinctness of his insight, they assumed to his mind a magnitude more nearly approaching their real importance than was apprehended by men of inferior powers of intellectual and moral conception. Liberty, progress, virtue — to these and kindred ideas did he devote his energies of thought, and upon them did he expend his resources of communication. To lead a single mind, and much more, to bring society to embrace these truths in their genuine character, was a task which he thought worthy of all the strength he had to bestow. But in his fidelity to this work he would not suffer himself to be trammelled by any of the restraints which policy, or even too intimate coöperation with others, might have cast around him. From first to last his language and his conduct in regard to the liberty, which is man's birthright, were marked by the strictest consistency.

But deeper even than his love of liberty was the sentiment of religion. If ever one lived who might be pronounced the child rather than the servant of religion, one of whom it might be said in the words of the

Apostle, that his "life was hid with Christ in God," it was he of whose life we are speaking. His religion pervaded and filled his being, it was the strength and joy of his soul. So devoid was he of austerity or artificial solemnity, such a calm simplicity ran through his whole life, that the depth of religious emotion which lay within his heart may not have been known to most observers. In him religion wrought with less opposition from appetite or self-will than she must generally encounter in her endeavors to form the soul into the likeness of the Divine image, and in him therefore was seen that "beauty of holiness," which shone through the habits of his daily life, like the sunlight through the clouds which it fills with radiance. Dr. Channing's piety was founded on the Christian revelation of "the Father." It was the piety of profound reverence tempered by filial love. The goodness of God was reflected upon his heart from every thing in the creation. In the Divine Providence he placed a trust so grateful, patient, and entire, that it seemed like a child's confidence in a parent's care, — and such it was. His conceptions of the Divine government were singularly *real*, and they gave him a composure of spirit and a steadfastness of hope that has seldom been equalled. Who that heard him discourse from the text, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice," however dull their own religious sensibility, could fail to perceive the strength of his conviction of the rectitude and beneficence which superintend the affairs of the universe? His faith had a strength and constancy, a liveliness of conception, a power of realization, which I want words to describe. It is said in the Scriptures that "the just shall live by faith," and the meaning of this declara-

tion was exhibited in him. The devotion which distinguished him beneath the parental roof grew, amidst the influences of life and under the study of the Scriptures, into a frame of mind that could have been nothing less than a foretaste of the communion which is enjoyed by them who have entered the Divine presence above. To his view the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin was manifest from its character of opposition or insensibility to a God, who revealed himself, in his laws and judgments not less than in his gifts, as Love. Whatever darkened or confused the image of the Father as set before man in the Gospel, he regarded with the utmost grief and was most anxious to remove. He wished that others might see, with him, the Infinite Father seated on the throne of the universe. With this tender and reverential piety he united a conscientiousness that was worthy to be its companion. I never saw another man in whom the principle of rectitude was so strong and wakeful. It was this alone that ever made me afraid of him, but I did stand in fear of that judgment which would never let partiality, nor compassion even, blind him to any compromise of personal integrity. Always ready to be as lenient as the truth would permit, his discernment of moral obliquity was too keen and the impression it made on him too deep to allow any one who wished to retain his esteem to deviate from the line of right. His religious character, clinging thus on the one side and the other to piety and rectitude, both of which, while their basis is in human nature, lift their summits into heaven, had at once a stability and an elevation that are rarely witnessed.

Central among his religious convictions was his faith in Christianity. To him the Christian religion was God's

"unspeakable gift." It was his study and his delight; the occasion of an unutterable gratitude and an unquenchable hope. Jesus was the messenger and the revelation of the Father, the manifestation and pledge of the Divine love to man. On this theme, oh! how eloquently would he speak; with the eloquence of faith, and feeling, and experience. Christianity, in his estimation, was not so much stamped as impregnated with divinity. Its revelations he welcomed, its commandments he received, its promises he cherished. On the Christian religion he built all his hopes for the individual and for the race. With him it was at once the bow of promise and the instrument of regeneration. The character of Christ he studied with intense interest. He there enlarged and rectified his knowledge of God; he there learned the destiny of man. Jesus glorified through suffering, a Conqueror and a Saviour through submission to death, was a theme which kindled his soul into Apostolic rapture. From the cross he saw beams of mercy descending upon a dark and sinful world. How have our hearts, my brethren, thrilled as his simple words of faith and love, uttered over the memorials of our Lord's passion, have carried us to Calvary, and from Calvary to heaven. The admiration, the gratitude, the confidence which he felt towards Christ, gave such earnestness to his tones that no one could for the time resist their persuasion. To exhibit the character of Jesus and bring men into sympathy with it, to unfold the claims of his Gospel, as they are seen in its origin and its contents, to awaken in others a perception of the infinite worth of such a religion and an experience of its Divine power, was the object nearest his heart. This was the end of his ministry; to this he dedicated his life. His faith in

the might of Christian truth became stronger with every year of his life, and every month of observation; and this confidence he strove to infuse into other minds. "We need," said he, on the last time on which he spoke in public, and they were among the last words which he wrote, "we need a new faith in what Christianity is to accomplish. We scarcely believe what we see of the triumphs of the Cross. This is the most disastrous unbelief of our times." Sustained himself by such a faith he never despaired for the future, nor was discouraged by circumstances of present gloom. While God reigned, and Christianity was on earth, he had hope for man.

He had hope for man, and he had faith in man. This faith in the capabilities and destinies of human nature was perhaps his most conspicuous peculiarity. As a theologian and a preacher, it was unquestionably that which distinguished him. The worth of man, in the sight of God; the worth of man, as the creature of God, and the possessor of faculties on which are imprinted the laws of boundless expansion and endless growth; the worth of man, as attested by the blood of Christ shed for his redemption; the worth of man, as therefore the fact which lies at the foundation of all religious aspiration or effort, teaching or culture, it seemed to be made the special office of this minister of the truth to establish in the belief of his fellow-men. Dr. Channing had no love of controversy; it was foreign from his gentle spirit and his pure tastes. But when he saw the character of the Heavenly Father misunderstood and traduced, and man made the victim as well as the subject of his brother's misrepresentation, he felt himself bound to expose the enormity of such errors. So invete-

rate was the belief respecting man's native vileness, so did it color all religious teaching and affect religious experience, that he spoke and wrote on this subject with a strength of expression, and a frequency, that may have created an impression that he either exaggerated or overvalued the true doctrine. But was it so? His doctrine was, that human nature is God's work, and therefore cannot be vile; that it is the most wonderful work of his hands with which we are acquainted, and therefore should be treated with respect; that it is made "in the image of God," and therefore is worthy of the highest consideration. He demanded reverence for human nature as it comes from the hands of the Creator, and he said that both justice and piety require us to regard it with serious and grateful reverence. Was he not right? He did not ask you to reverence human *character*, nor man as he appears with the signatures of his Divine origin effaced and his spiritual being foul with sin; but human *nature*, as God sends it down from his own creative will, when he makes the new-born being "a living soul." On this doctrine Dr. Channing founded the most solemn expositions of duty, and the most fearful exposures of sin. The dignity of human nature proved the degradation of the sinner. The guilt was shown to be in proportion to the fall. Others may have indiscreetly handled this doctrine, and not only turned it from its proper uses, but mistaken its character, and so have wrought mischief in the name of truth; but this cannot impair the correctness or the value of the representations, which he so vividly displayed and so forcibly maintained, that they affected men as if a new discovery had flashed upon their minds. It is through the exhibition of his views of human nature,

that Dr. Channing will probably hereafter hold his place among the great religious teachers of his age and of posterity. By exposing the prevalent error he reformed the theology of a portion of the Christian Church, and the influence of his opinions, advanced and sustained as they were by his fervid pen, was manifest in the modification or decay of long-established systems.

It was a necessary consequence of the views which he entertained of a nature so noble, whose capacities, however they might be perverted or blunted, were indestructible, that he should take a strong interest in the condition of his fellow-men; and beholding their wretchedness, as they lay the victims of ignorance and captives of sin, should feel the most earnest desire for their instruction and elevation. Hence, of late years, his attention was particularly drawn to the circumstances in the social state which keep humanity from an exercise or a knowledge of its powers. Society, it was his belief, should raise, not depress the individual. Government should help man to be free, not surround him with institutions that cramp his force. The great evil of slavery, said he, is, "that it does all that lies in human power to unmake men." His philanthropy therefore was as broad as the world, and reached down to the principles of human nature, the elements of character, and the fundamental laws of condition. He loved and honored man, wherever he might be found, for in the lowest he saw one who was his brother and a child of the Universal Father. His sympathy with man was caught from communion with the spirit of Jesus. His heart felt, his tongue pleaded for the fallen, not as outcasts, but as wanderers who

should be brought back by kind persuasion into the bosom of the human brotherhood.

Although the infirmities of his physical system compelled him to decline other than occasional participation in duties of a public nature, and in a measure secluded him from society, Dr. Channing had acquired an influence coëxtensive with the civilized world. His celebrity as a preacher accompanied his name wherever it went, although he seldom appeared in any other than his own pulpit. Many of his discourses, however, have been given to the world, and many individuals from distant parts of the country and from foreign lands have listened to the tones of his voice as they filled this house. Those tones had singular sweetness and power. At first they fell so gently on the ear, that they failed to satisfy expectation; but they soon enchained the attention and touched the heart; even as the music of a quiet stream, or the passage of the summer's wind through the leaves, if we pause long enough to catch its melody, fastens us to the spot and awakens a thousand tender thoughts. The characteristic of Dr. Channing's style of pulpit address was simplicity — a simplicity so much in harmony with his whole character, so spontaneous an expression indeed of that character, that over them who knew him it had even more power than over the stranger. Does not memory recall him, my friends, as he appeared in this place, when his fragile form rose before us, and his feeble voice read the hymn which melted into our hearts as it came from his low but impressive utterance? He entered on his discourse as one talking familiarly on themes of serious but pleasant interest. As he proceeded, his voice gained volume and force, his countenance

beamed with the illumination of high sentiment, his figure seemed to expand into proportions befitting the majesty of his theme and the grandeur of his thoughts. His diction becomes wonderfully rich, his words are pictures, his illustrations flow on as if he were unburdening a mind so full that it must give out a portion of its wealth. What vividness of intellectual conception, what fervor of chastened feeling, what energy of spiritual life! Hark! there is no sound but that which issues from those lips; the congregation are fixed in motionless attention, tears may be seen on many an upturned face; the persuasion of his language becomes more solemn, the sympathy between him and us more close, the address more direct, the silent response more immediate; till the discourse pauses, and we are restored to a consciousness of our independent existence only by the words, "Let us pray." How often have we been thus affected by his wonderful power over our highest faculties.

It was, however, by his published writings that Dr. Channing exercised an influence, not only throughout our land, but wherever civilization and commerce have opened a way for the entrance of a foreign literature. In Great Britain his name is held in even higher regard than here, where sectarian and local prejudices prevent a full appreciation of the services which he has rendered to religion and humanity. His works, though various in kind and occasion, are pervaded by a common purpose and spirit. They are all directed to the illustration of Divine truth, of the principles of real excellence, and of the unchangeable laws of duty. To inspire an understanding and love of man's highest interests is their object. For this alone did he ever take up his pen, and for this, while

he lived, he was ready to appear whenever circumstances revealed the peculiar want of the public mind or the apathy of the public heart. As literary productions they are doubtless subject to criticism, which may expose faults of rhetorical structure or verbal expression. But they have the sterling merit of a lucid and easy flow of thought, fervid feeling, and direct as well as lofty aim. Their eloquence, whether it be of the highest sort or not, is undeniable eloquence, for it results from a vivid apprehension of a subject, which it discusses in the glowing language of the heart, and it issues in establishing a sympathy between the writer and the reader. If these be not the tokens of eloquence, where shall they be found?

His position at the time of his removal from us was as important as it was peculiar. No other man probably had, throughout that large portion of the world in which the English language is spoken, so many minds disposed by their present sympathy with him to welcome whatever opinions he might put forth. His mental independence and moral integrity were guarantees that he would offer nothing which he did not esteem true; and the nature of the inquiries to which his mind and heart were devoted was a sufficient security for the continuance of his labors in the fields of moral and religious investigation. On him, therefore, more than on any other individual, truth and philanthropy may be said to have placed their dependence. That reliance has been unexpectedly dissolved. The services which he contemplated, or to which he might have been called, will devolve on others. He has been taken away in the midst of usefulness, when his moral force, like his influence, was the largest, and his spiritual life was approaching but had not crossed its meridian.

He seems to have left his work unfinished. There was more that he wished to do, and more which he was peculiarly fitted to accomplish. He seems to me to have begun within the last two or three years to understand his relations to the world. He had once belonged, we may say, to a single congregation, then to a particular community; but now his ministry embraced mankind, and he sustained to multitudes, in different regions of the earth, the relations of teacher and friend. Had he lived, his views of usefulness, which had already passed their former limits, would have stretched themselves over the globe, and down the ages of the future; and the accomplishment, we cannot doubt, would have justified this expansion. But all that might have been meditated or executed has now been prevented, as he on whom so great a work rested has vanished from our sight. In view of what might have been effected, we involuntarily speak of his premature death. But let us not forget how long and how well he had lived. Nor let us repel from our minds the thought, which it was his great desire to implant there, that God is supreme and righteous. A higher Power overrules the affairs of men. A Will infinitely wiser than ours, a Will absolutely right, determines the events of Providence. In that will he, whose loss we should mourn not with an impatient grief, but in a spirit kindred to that which he always cherished, reposed an implicit confidence. "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt," were the words of Him whom our friend set before himself and us as the Pattern to be followed, alike in duty and in trial. To have known one by whose name the age will be marked in history, whose influence will extend to our remote descendants, and in whom was seen a

signal illustration of the lessons which he drew from the life of Jesus, is a privilege to be recounted among our choicest blessings. To our narrow vision he may seem to have died when he was most wanted. The world needed his presence, we are ready to think. But God will take care of the world. His protection, his parental interest alone, is indispensable for its welfare. The greatest and best of the children of men must leave the walks of mortal experience, and a cloud appears to those who have leaned on their counsel to come over human affairs. But the light of God's love still shines tranquilly on, and he never "leaves himself without witness" in the labors of those whom he raises up, as one after another quits the appointed scene of usefulness. If it had been necessary for us or for the world that our friend should fill a longer term of years, the prayers which were offered for his restoration would have obtained an answer agreeable to the wishes which they expressed. It did not please the Father so to answer them. Let not us be faithless, but believing and filial. Nothing but trust in God, faith in him as the Father, a submission of the heart to his will, can enable us to view our present affliction rightly or bear it calmly; but this can, — a trust like that which *he* exhibited at all times, in life and in death, and of which the prospect of death enabled him to give the most impressive as well as the final proof.

He maintained his trust in God to the last, unbroken, undimmed, as firm and serene in the closing hour as in the midst of the labors on which his strength was expended. It would be a violation of the respect we owe to the intimacies of kindred to enter that sick chamber,

if a voice did not issue thence, calling us to see how the Christian can die. It is the voice of that Providence which gives us the lesson, never to be forgotten. We cross the threshold, and with tearful eyes behold the scene. But tears are not the suitable expression of what we feel, as we stand around him who will soon leave that apartment for heaven. The view of death, as it approaches, neither agitates nor saddens him. Life is pleasant in its many connections, and desirable for the opportunity it would afford to execute long-meditated plans of usefulness that have of late seemed to advance towards their completion. Suddenly did the mandate come which laid his now almost wasted strength upon that bed, far from much that was dear to him of local association and human friendship. But he is as tranquil as if he were enjoying health and home and the prosecution of every cherished purpose. He speaks of the Father's love, and of the delightful reality, beyond even his usual experience, with which it pressed upon his heart; of the inappreciable gift of Christianity, and of its divine power and sure success; of the kindness which he receives through the offices rendered by those about him; and of the circumstances under which he is called to leave the world as determined by the Will which knows what is best. It is not in set discourse that he thus reveals the composure of his spirit, but in words more or less continued as his strength allows. There is no effort, and no excitement; but only the simplicity of truth and the repose of faith. He sleeps, and fragments of prayer are heard stealing from his lips, as if his dreams were of the higher world. He wakes, and asks that a part of the Saviour's teaching from the Mount be

read to him. He remarks upon the beauty and preciousness and depth of meaning in those verses. The day wears on, as he calmly waits the appointed hour, and when the sun has fallen below the western sky, his countenance, over which the hand of death has passed so lightly that its momentary pressure could not be detected, bears the expression of an unearthly purity and peace. So did he die. The lesson we have read needs no exposition. It speaks to our hearts. God grant it may not speak in vain!

Suddenly and mysteriously, except as faith resolves all mysteries into a perfect will, and peculiar as are the circumstances under which this light has been withdrawn from our firmament, there is that in the time of its departure which may speak to our hearts of the gracious love of God. The past summer had been one of the happiest that Dr. Channing had ever spent. The valley of the Housatonic had become endeared to him, to use his own words, by his communion with "its beautiful nature and its generous spirits." Amidst its magnificent scenery, and as if inspired by its free air, he had delivered an address which, even beyond his usual productions, breathes a tone of lofty sentiment and generous hope. Nothing that he had ever written indicates a stronger or more genial exercise of the spirit, a warmer interest in man, a heartier faith in Christianity, or a more fervent confidence in the progress of our race, than this address, which the impulses of his own philanthropy led him to compose a few weeks before his death. If he had foreseen that this was the last time on which he should be permitted to utter his deep convictions, and his earnest wishes, he could not have chosen words better suited to close his ministry on the earth. How beautiful are his concluding ejacula-

tions; the aspirations of hope, and the breathings of devotion. "O, come, thou kingdom of heaven, for which we daily pray! Come, Friend and Saviour of the race, who didst shed thy blood on the cross to reconcile man to man, and earth to Heaven! Come, ye predicted ages of righteousness and love, for which the faithful have so long yearned! Come, Father Almighty, and crown with thine omnipotence the humble strivings of thy children to subvert oppression and wrong, to spread light and freedom, peace and joy, the truth and spirit of thy Son, through the whole earth!" Do they not seem like the heart's last offering on the altar of humanity?

Its last? No. To believe that, would be injustice to him, and denial of Christianity. He still lives, to serve the cause which was dear to his soul. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," were the words of Him whom he followed. The life of self-culture and freedom, of piety and righteousness, of faith and love and duty, the life which was expanded in its beautiful symmetry amidst earthly labors and infirmities, the life of the spirit, which was nourished by union with the Father and the Son, the immortal life — this continues beyond the bounds of the mortal existence. He lives in a more blessed society than he has left behind; in the companionship of glorified saints, in converse with the Saviour whom he loved, and in the near presence of the Holy Father. His toils have been exchanged for the rest that remains for the people of God, the frail garment of the flesh has been laid aside that the vesture of immortality might be put on, and now has he entered those mansions which his Lord had gone before to prepare. There does he still live, but not forgetful of the interests to which his

life below was devoted. Still are they present to his remembrance, still cherished in his regard. The welcome of the Master has thrilled his spirit, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" and methinks the response has been, 'Lord, help thou thine own cause on the earth whence thou hast received me into thy joy.' For that cause he still intercedes. Amidst the glories of heaven it is the burden of his supplication. For that cause his influence still abides among men. He pleads with us on its behalf through thoughts that can never perish out of the world's storehouse of truth, and sentiments that can never die out of human hearts. He calls us to serve the Master whom he served, and to follow Christ in the regeneration of the world. He calls us to renounce all low pursuits, and consecrate ourselves to justice and humanity and religion. His voice floats upon the echoes of his past instruction; it comes from the skies where he now dwells. Honored and sainted spirit! we hear thy call. It shall not be heard in vain. Thou shalt draw us from the vanities of sense, and the follies of sin. Thou shalt lead us onward till we meet thee in the abodes of immortal life. We will not say farewell, for still do we inhabit the same universe filled with the Father's love. We will not say farewell, for we are still united by those bonds of faith and sympathy which are the same in heaven as on earth. Teacher and friend of our souls! we wait in hope, till the celestial glories in which thou art rejoicing shall burst upon our disembodied vision, and we behold thee clothed with light among those who surround the throne.

1st Series. No. 188.

EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

By Rev. ALVAN LAMSON, D. D.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

March, 1843.

Price 3 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER,
2 School Street.

EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

How often is the Gospel spoken of as a quickening power! And men's hearts needed to be quickened, for their consciences had become torpid, sleepy, dead. The Gospel of Jesus was to awaken them. That was spirit; that was life. And it did awaken many a slumbering conscience, and its fruit was a religion of great earnestness and power.

And can we doubt the necessity of earnestness in religion? On this topic I propose now briefly to speak, as one to which it may be profitable for us to give a few moment's attention. For there is too much coldness in men's religion, at the present day, in that of too many at least; too great deadness to the highest truths; and a spirit of piety and love needs to be relighted, kindled anew in the breasts of multitudes.

The necessity of earnestness in religion. — Where should we be in earnest, if not in religion? What interests demand earnestness, if not those of religion, which infinitely transcend in value all other interests. Other interests are measured by time, by the period of the pres-

ent fleeting life. The interests of religion are measured by eternity, by the soul's undying existence. Other interests stand in the outward, the perishing, in distinctions which death must soon annihilate. The interests of religion pertain to the conscious, thinking principle, to our inner being, to our own spiritual ever living essence. What interests demand earnestness, if not those of religion! Fidelity to ourselves, to the laws of our being and happiness, demands it. Fidelity to duty, to conscience, to the religious element of our nature, above all, demands it.

The worth of religion, its purifying and exalting power, its holy voice of consolation and hope, its revelations of a father's love, the tidings of mercy it brings from his throne, its promise of pardon to the penitent, and of a happy immortality to the dying believer, all inculcate the duty of giving serious attention to it; all accuse our delay, chide our negligence, and hold the language of rebuke to our cold, dull hearts. The endowments of the soul, its capacity of unending growth and progress in truth, in holiness, and in love, demand earnestness in religion. The infinite consequences which flow from our present acts, from the use we make of the brief term of our earthly life, ask for seriousness. The momentous evil of sin, the blight it brings over so many hopes, and the tears with which it fills so many eyes, the gloom and misery it carries into so many households once united in affection and gladdened with prosperity, the wretchedness it entails on the transgressor here, and the shadows in which it shrouds the future to his eye, make a powerful appeal to our reason and our sensibility.

The uncertainty of life, the many instances of sudden,

or unexpected death, the dissolution of the young, the vigorous, and the blooming, who are cut down like the flowers of summer, which untimely fall, — the slow procession, which accompanies the remains of an acquaintance or a neighbor to their last resting place, every stroke of the solemn tolling bell, yea, every pain and every sickness we feel, and every accident, admonish us of the importance of earnestness in religion. The falling leaves of autumn are each year reading you a lesson of thoughtfulness, preaching in your ear a homily on mortality, and warning you to be up and doing. Every time the curtains of night are drawn around you, and sleep closes your eyelids, you are reduced to the image of death. Every thing, all vicissitude and decay, the perishing insect, the dying verdure, the work of change which is incessantly going on before your eyes, all conspire to sound the alarm to the careless heart; all warn you to live a true and earnest life, to be faithful and devout, to love God and your fellow beings, and repent of your sins while you walk the pleasant earth, and inhale the free air, and the light of the sun penetrates your dwellings, and opportunity lasts, and duty remains to be fulfilled. All are so many arguments to earnestness in religion. The words of the Saviour, those words which have infused new moral life into so many millions of hearts, animated with hope so many despairing ones, poured comfort into so many sorrowing breasts, those words of power which have gone forth to create all things anew; his labors, his sufferings, Gethsemane, Calvary, all plead for earnestness in religion. The worth of the soul, death, judgment, retribution, nature, the Bible, the prophets and Jesus, and the voice of truth in our own souls, plead for

it. Where should we be earnest, if not in religion? What other interest, work, purpose, or object demands it half so much? What other object can put in a claim, which will for a moment bear a comparison with this?

But I am dwelling too long on these general views. I must turn to other trains of thought. The age demands earnestness in religion. I would speak of this earnestness in its connexion with religious institutions, the Sabbath, the worship of God, and duties of the Christian life.

I begin with religious institutions. I would say something of their ground and use, and the value we should place on them. And by religious institutions, let me observe, I mean that which pertains to the outward form of Christianity, as it is usually received; its rites, its preaching, its Sabbaths, its organizations. I refer not to any particular organization, as of this or that church, or communion, whether democratical or hierarchical, but generally to what is connected with the visible ministrations of religion, and is necessary to secure them; to the church, as the term is used in its broadest and most extensive sense. And I say that in this sense, religious institutions, with all the faults, practical and theoretical, which cling to them, have been, and are, a source of good, and great good to the world, and cannot be dispensed with. They are not every thing, but they are not a mere dead instrument. They may need reform, or be susceptible of improvement; they may require to have new life and vigor infused into them; but taken as they are, they are not a mere incumbrance, something which has done its work, which has become obsolete, — the use of which the age has outgrown, and with which we have now nothing to do, but to see it decently buried out of

our sight. They are not the mere shell, the husk of old opinions and usages. They are not the casket merely which contains the gem. They are agents which are still acting with great power on the human mind, not doing all they might, but still doing much. They are instrumentalities with which God is still working, by which he brings about some glorious results.

And I repeat, they cannot be dispensed with. The Christian world must have churches, Sabbaths, preachers. There must be some outward and standing ministrations of religion, which must be brought to bear on the human mind, which must be instruments of its culture, helps to its weakness, mementos to its forgetfulness, and aids to the developement of the religious sentiment.

The history of the past testifies to the value of the Sabbath and its rites. It is not too much to say, that nearly all the benefit, which the world has received from Christianity, has been derived through the channel of the Sabbath. Had it not been for the Sabbath, when, before the discovery of the art of printing the Christian records lay wrapped up in manuscripts, which from the labor of transcription were expensive, and were read by few, scarcely a glimmering of religious knowledge would have penetrated the minds of the people. But the Sabbath came, bringing with it not the purifying influence of prayer merely, but a certain degree of mental illumination. Knowledge was imparted, men's intellects were awakened, and materials of reflection were furnished them, slender enough, no doubt, at times, but still worth something; and not only were men informed as religious beings, but the elements of a new and better civilization were introduced into the bosom of society.

The means of information are now more widely diffused, by means of the press; but when we reflect how many in Christian communities are incapable of reading, and how many others need to have their curiosity roused and their sluggishness overcome, before they will give attention to religious subjects; and how many, were there no Sabbath, would give themselves no rest from business; how many avarice would chain down to an unceasing round of toil and care, we must be convinced of the immense blessings the world is yet deriving from the Christian Sabbath — and always will derive from it. The Sabbath will always be necessary to moral and religious culture, necessary to recall man to himself, and to reflection on his character and destination — necessary to diminish the pressure of the world and check the force of passions which, by their nature, ever tend to excess.

The truth is, man needs the elevating influences of the Sabbath with whatever makes the appeal to his higher sentiments — his veneration, his conscientiousness, his benevolence, and hope — to counteract the temptations to a material, worldly, and sensual life. No one can say that he should have been what he is without the Sabbath. He most certainly would not; for the world would have been different, and he would have been educated under different influences, and lived in a different moral atmosphere. And should the religious observances of the day ever cease, an incalculable amount of the best influences would be forever withdrawn from the world.

Yes: these observances have done and are still doing much. It was this "foolishness of preaching," the church, the Sabbath, Christian rites, in times past, which brought Christianity to every man's door, to his fireside,

and into his heart; to the bedside of the sick and dying, and the solitude of the mourner. It poured out its strains of thrilling eloquence in the chief cities and rich capitals; it thundered at the manifold gates of error, and before the fortresses of sin; it spoke its rebukes in the florid but glowing rhetoric of a Chrysostom; it came warm from the lips of the learned and copious Origen, and the fervid Ambrose; it scorched in the fiery eloquence of a Luther; it charmed in the tones of the persuasive Fenelon, and won the soul in the earnest utterances of our own Channing.

Yes: let religious institutions, outward organizations and observances, Sabbaths, pulpit discourses, public rites of religion, end, and your churches become heaps of ruins: and even now, with all the light diffused by means of the press, you would soon witness a deterioration of man; the tide of improvement would ebb; the evils of the social condition would multiply; humanity, truth, right — all that is good, pure, beautiful, or holy, would be conscious of the wound; avarice would give itself no pause; and busy care would toil on till it sunk, weary and exhausted, into the grave.

As to any new religious organizations, differing greatly from those which now exist among us, and which, in their essential features, approach as near to the model of primitive Christianity as can well be, they are, I imagine, out of the question. We may give more efficacy to our present forms; we may modify them somewhat, if need be; we may breathe new life into them; but, viewed as forms, they are as simple, and as well adapted, in their essential features, to meet the wants of the heart, probably, as any which could be substituted in their place. The alterna-

tive, I imagine, is between these, or something like them, and none. Without some public rites of religion, there would not long be a Sabbath; and do away the Sabbath, you cause the greatest blessing the world has ever enjoyed, and what has proved the most important instrument of its civilization, in modern ages, to cease.

We must be earnest, then, in our attachment to our Christian altars, and we must give some visible token that we are so. We must be earnest in our Sabbath observances and worship. I do not mean that we should be superstitious, or that the Sabbath should be to us a melancholy day. I am no advocate for gloom and asceticism in religion. I would not have piety take a narrow and monkish garb. I would have it ever free and cheerful; I would not have cheerfulness banished from the Sabbath; but I would have the day kept with a single-hearted and glad earnestness. The primitive believers observed it joyfully, as the day of their Saviour's resurrection, and therefore the birth-day of hope to the world. They hailed its return joyfully, and so shall we, if we are earnest Christians. The Sabbath will be to us, as it was to them, truly the first and queen of days. We shall love it; we shall love its aspect, its rites, its holy, tranquillizing influences, its deep repose, its stillness, interrupted only by the cheerful notes which, rung forth from the church tower, and, sounding over hill and valley, summon the devout worshipper to the house of his Father. We shall love all. The gathering for worship, the hallowed air of the place, the voice of Christian devotion, the discourse, the hymn, the holy chant, all will have a language for the heart. To the devout mind all are significant, and it extracts from them a calm pleasure. So it has been, and so

it is. To multitudes the Sabbath and its rites, all that belongs to it, are still dear. They love all. The day comes to them with its hallowing influences, and its pleasant associations. They love it for what it is, and what it has been to themselves, so often lifting their thoughts above the earth, and unfolding those truths of which, in their spiritual and higher natures, they have ever felt their need — so often gladdening and strengthening them, comforting them in sorrow, stilling their troubled minds, as Jesus stilled the agitated waters.

They love it for what it has been to themselves, and they love it for what it has been to others; for to how many has it brought a respite from severe and exhausting labor, — a breathing time, and the only breathing time they have had! To how many slaves, and to others, doomed to the bondage of unending toil, has it brought an interval of grateful rest, which has been to them as a green spot in the desert, a cooling fountain in a sultry land! How much has it done for the cause of human improvement! How has it softened the horrors of war, mitigating the ferocity of men's manners, and calming their passions! How has it changed the current of human thought, elevated morality and intellect! How can he who possesses either humanity or religion, be insensible to the value of the Christian Sabbath, its repose, its rites, its worship, its humanizing and exalting effects? The benefits the world has received from Christianity, I repeat, have been chiefly conveyed through this channel; and how can one who loves God or his fellow beings, see no beauty in the day, and no cause of gratitude for it, and no reasons for wishing to continue its religious observance?

If the luxurious and idle less need it as a day of rest, it

brings a blessing to the poor and oppressed, to those whose hands are rigid, and whose bodies are bent, with toil. They demand a Sabbath; humanity pleads for it: humanity as well as religion, if indeed we can separate them. The heart of man demands it. When, in the madness of Atheism, the Sabbath was abolished in France, and every tenth day was substituted in its place, the heart of the nation could not endure the change, but continued to observe the old Sabbaths. The heart of universal humanity has ever cried out for Sabbaths, and ever will, till this work day world shall end. They for the moment equalize human conditions, affording relief to the overwrought energies of a part of the human family, reminding the other part of their spiritual relationship with the humblest of their fellow beings, and elevating the thoughts of both to that world where all earthly distinctions will be forgotten.

The earnest Christian loves the day and its uses; he loves the house of God, and weekly visits it; and he does not find that his worldly business prospers less, and his soul, he is certain, prospers more. The magnet is not more true to the pole, than his heart to the Christian altar.

And so it will be found, that if a people are serious in their religion, the house of worship will show it. You will see it in the eager crowd, and the well filled pews; in the composed and fixed look, indicating earnestness of heart. You will see it when the threatening aspect of the skies, or other circumstances are such as not particularly to invite attendance, when they furnish an excuse of absence to the cold and inanimate Christian. — I know that there are formalists in religion, Pharisees who make

their piety to stand chiefly in outward observances, who, for all the world would not miss a prayer or a sermon, but who manifest little of the Christian temper in their lives, who seem to leave all religion at the church door when they go away, ready to be taken up when the week is ended, and they enter for the worship of the next Sabbath. I know that there are such formalists in religion, modern Pharisees. But this is not the error which is now the most common. The other is far more so, the error of those who neglect the call to the house of prayer, who allow holy seasons to come and go, bringing to their hearts no blessed influences, the account of whose sins will be hereafter swelled by a fearful amount of lost Sabbaths.

The earnest Christian, as I said, is a lover of God's house. And he comes to it with a serious mind, animated by a religious motive, — the desire to profit by its exercises as a moral and religious being ; and he comes therefore, not bringing his body merely, but leaving his soul behind ; comes not to gratify a fastidious taste, to sit at an intellectual banquet merely, to admire melliflu-ous tones, well rounded periods, a graceful person, or a rhetorical mnnner, — comes not for the sake of decorum, or to promote his worldly reputation. No. He comes with humility, and under a sense of need ; comes to prostrate his soul before God in penitence for sin, and seek a renewal of his devout purposes, and strength to live a purer and more Christian life. And therefore he is satisfied with plain truth, plainly uttered, and he leaves the church not to criticise, but to apply what he has heard to his spiritual needs. He does not expect, nor ask, always to be entertained with novel ideas, with the efforts of a bril-

liant imagination, or splendid oratory. He is content, if he can find something which he can turn to the nutriment of his piety, to his own correction or reproof, which will send him away not admiring the preacher, but meditating on himself, on God, on duty, on Christian obligation, that so he may depart a better and a stronger man than he came.

Undoubtedly the principle which should animate the worshipper is often lost sight of. Persons go to church in the hope of being entertained, when they should go from a purely religious motive. And this is one reason, no doubt, why the exercises of the place often appear so little impressive. They do not go from the right motive. They do not take with them the right feelings and views, and therefore they complain of want of interest in the services, when, in truth, the defect may be, not in the services, but in their own imperfect preparation for them; in the absence of due seriousness, due earnestness of heart, in themselves.

I have said that we must be earnest in our Sabbath observances and worship, and I have alluded to some of the tokens and effects of such earnestness. Further, we must be earnest in practice. This is the great end of all — an earnest Christian life. I do not mean that one-sided earnestness, which concentrates itself on a single idea, a single reform, or a single sin. I mean an earnestness which embraces the whole circle of human duty, acts, and influences — self-reform, and self-improvement, and the duties of benevolence.

Every feeling and affection of our nature must be made to do homage to religion. We must take her with us to our homes. She must sit at our firesides with us;

watch over the current of our daily thoughts, to secure their purity; go with us to our places of business, to the farm, to the shop of the artisan, the merchant's desk; must regulate our industry, our gains; must render our actions kind, our tempers even and cheerful; must soften every asperity of feeling; check every impatient expression; guard us against every uncharitable judgment and every harsh censure; must make us honest, sincere, truthful, scrupulous not to violate the right of the humblest individual, or inflict one unnecessary pang.

We must live out the truth that is in us, live a true life. We must be faithful to the spirit of Christian morality, a morality founded on principle, and flowing out of a heart that reverences and loves the true, the pure, and the good, and finds joy in obedience, and in virtue her own reward. Christ's precepts embody a morality of great strictness and wide extent. To these, the Christian world is yet very unfaithful. If you compare the lives of Christians with the ideal of a holy life presented in Christ's teachings; compare the morality of the world, its temper, spirit, and governing motives, with the precepts given in the sermon on the mount; or still further, compare them with the Saviour's self-sacrificing love, and pure, earnest life, the disparity strikes you at once. How poor seems the morality of the world by the side of those exalted precepts, that heavenly life! When I refer to an earnest, practical religion, I refer to a life in which these precepts are lived out, — a true Christian life, — not a bloodless image, a mere dry skeleton, but a living, breathing form, full of freshness and beauty, — a body animated with a divine soul. Would that we could see a more full manifestation of the Christian spirit on earth. Would that the

lives of Christians were more rich in a pure and expansive Christian virtue; that instead of this cold, meagre love, and this imperfect sympathy, we beheld more depth and earnestness of affection, and fewer remains of the selfish principle. When shall we see the Son of Man coming with power in the hearts of his followers? When shall we behold his meek, holy, benevolent spirit, transfused into the lives of the moving mass of beings around us? When shall we see the affairs of the world, business, diversion, social intercourse, politics, literature, criticism, the press, all human institutions, projects, aims, pervaded by the morality of the Gospel?

Christians should be more earnest in their religion, and their earnestness should appear in their lives, and in lives very different from those which multitudes now lead. When we look abroad upon the world, and contrast it as it is with what Christ came and shed his blood on the cross to make it, how must we feel rebuked and humbled! The lives of Christians so partially imbued with the disinterested love, the gentleness, the calm, patient, forgiving spirit of Jesus, are a reproach to Christendom. It is time Christians opened their eyes to the work that is to be done, often in their own hearts, and with their own characters, very faulty if viewed in comparison with the perfect standard of Christianity; and often without, among their fellow-beings, whom they are bound to love more and better.

I do not mean that nothing has been done, that the world is now where Christianity found it. There has certainly been gain, and great gain on the side of truth and right. Many depths of sin have been explored, and many a pitying eye has been turned upon the obscure

abodes of human misery, and the song of gratitude has been awakened in the hearts of many desolate and perishing ones. The world has witnessed many triumphs of Christian principle; many fruits of Christian love; much salutary reform, of which we can say, this is truly a Christian work, — this is pure and undefiled religion, — this is love to man. But how much yet remains to be performed! How many hearts are yet cold! How many tempers are yet earthly, and need renewal! And go where you will, in communities calling themselves Christian, how much sin and wickedness go, if not unrebuked, yet unreformed!

An earnest religion: — Why, must not all religion be earnest, if it be any thing? Religion is either nothing, or it deals with great and solemn realities, and it must therefore be earnest. And have we not need of an earnest religion? Life is earnest. Duty, moral obligation, virtue, kindness, love, — these are earnest words. Suffering — is not that real, a word full of deep and terrible significance? And do we not all need an earnest religion? How else shall we meet calmly life's many trials? How see our hopes wither, our brightest visions fade, and things fair and lovely continually perish at our side? What but an earnest religion can give us strength to say, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt?" Surely, we need an earnest religion.

Am I asked how this earnestness is to be infused into the heart? My reply is, go to the Bible. Read that, and you will every time rise from its perusal a better and a more earnest man. That is the most earnest of books, earnest without gloom. Its piety is healthy and cheerful as that which nature teaches. But in earnestness, in

power, in depth, in words which find their way to the heart, and which affect us as no other words do, or can, that surpasses all other books. There is no other book, which so anatomizes the human soul, so probes the spirit to its inmost depths, as the Bible. No other book so holds the mirror up to nature, or teaches us so much knowledge of ourselves. The penitence and devotion of the Christian world still utter themselves in the language of that old book, and find it fully adequate to their wants. All other language seems formal and frigid in comparison. No other book makes us so feel the guilt and deformity of sin, or so elevates the soul with ideas of the beauty and loveliness of virtue, holiness, purity and truth. View it as we will in its origin and history, there is that in it which affects us as no other book does. It is the most earnest of books. All the religious earnestness, that has been in the world for the last eighteen hundred years, has come from the Bible; and if we would acquire an earnest, practical religion, strict and serious, without being ascetic or melancholy, a religion full of joy, and trust, and hope, tender and shrinking from sin, and diligent in doing good, and dwelling in regions of humility and love, we must draw from the same deep fountain. The Bible makes earnest Christians.

But religion, especially this earnest religion, earnest in worship and in life, it will be said, requires sacrifices. True, it does. Christian practice — a life conformable to the purity of Christ's precepts, requires sacrifices, I admit. Christianity leads us to God through the path of self-denial and effort. It teaches us that we are to enter into life through a straight and narrow way. An earnest religion does require sacrifices, and often great ones.

But, tell me, do not other things, and things of inferior value, require sacrifices? And do you not cheerfully make them — to pleasure, to comfort, to wealth? The youth, who leaves his home to go and seek his fortune in a foreign land, among strangers, and in sickly climes, that he may return and pass the remnant of his days in the sweets of repose amid his native valleys, and in sight of his own beloved mountains — does he not make sacrifices? The student, the author, the candidate for literary honors, who pursues his solitary labors by the light of the pale midnight lamp, giving to consuming thought the hours which nature meant for rest, — does he make no sacrifices?

No earthly good is purchased without sacrifices. And will you refuse to make them for religion? Will you make no sacrifices to secure the soul's undying good? Will you make none for the love of God, nay, for the love of your children, who are now, surrounded by such influences as you provide, commencing an education for eternity? You give up much to the world, and to advance the temporal prosperity of your children, and their success gratifies a parent's pride. And will you give up nothing to place on their brow, and on your own, an unfading crown of life?

Go, then, child of earth, and labor for the meat which perisheth. Go, give thy heart to the world — go, make of it a God — go, give to it thy time, thy affections, thy soul, thy hopes, thy all. But will thy idol deliver thee, when, in thy distress, thou shalt call upon him? Will he hear thy prayer? Will he stand by thy side, to comfort thee in thy sorrowing hours? Will he come to dispel the shadows, which shall gather around thy dying pillow?

Can he save thy soul? And what shall all else profit thee, if thou save not thy soul? Those are solemn words of our Saviour, — fearfully solemn they are, — "What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

1st Series. No. 189.

SMALL SINS.

By Rev. HENRY WARE, Jr., D. D.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

April, 1843.

Price 3 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER,
2 School Street.

SMALL SINS.

JAMES, III. 5.

BEHOLD HOW GREAT A MATTER A LITTLE FIRE KINDLETH

THE apostle uses these words in stating the necessity of watching the tongue. As the powerful horse is governed by a slender bit, and the mighty ship is turned about by a very small helm; so, he says, does the tongue, though a small member, boast itself in doing great things. With a few words it may produce large and extensive consequences. Its small errors may lead to vast mischiefs. The slander which it whispers in the ear, not intending it shall go further, may be proclaimed aloud upon the house-top. The evil suspicion which was started in jest, may be circulated in earnest. The unkind reflection, which was made thoughtlessly, and with no intent to injure, may be spread abroad, increasing as it spreads, till it causes wide ruin to reputation and peace. The little flame of scandalous gossip, which you play with in company as a very pretty and harmless thing, may

grow wild and fierce, and rage far, and become a wide consuming conflagration. So great a matter may a little fire kindle.

What is thus true of evil speaking, is true universally. Trifles oftentimes lead to the most important consequences. The greatest results spring from apparently slight causes. There is a principle of growth in every thing. As the spark kindles and spreads; as the acorn unfolds, and stretches itself out into a proud and lofty tree; as the drop trickles from the summit of the mountain, and descending through the plain swells into a mighty river; as the helpless infant enters life without reason or skill, and in a few years stands up amongst men, a leader and blessing to his race; so it is universally; so it is in regard to the characters of men. Great results spring from little causes. And he that would prevent the growth of sin or secure the eminence of holiness, must watch the operation of small causes, and take advantage of trivial circumstances.

This is a sentiment which should be studiously impressed on our minds. It especially deserves the attention of the young, and of all who are solicitous to make attainment in virtue and religion. And this the rather, because there is such a propensity to despise small things. Little failings men will not take the trouble to correct, for they esteem them of little consequence. Little virtues they make no account of, for they seem to amount to nothing. But in truth they amount to much; they are of prime consequence; and to regard them contemptuously, as beneath our notice, is to subject ourselves to needless dangers, and fling away precious opportunities of advancement.

My object will be to present a few plain considerations which may help us to judge correctly on this point, and especially may teach us the danger of indulging in small sins.

1. We may remark then, first, that Life is made up of little things. It is in itself a great thing, and endures for a length of years; but it consists entirely of successive moments of most unimportant length; yet if each separately were despised, the whole would be thrown away. So too in regard to the actions and events of life. How very few of them, if taken by themselves, are of great moment! Only three or four in the course of a man's existence. The rest are little daily or hourly concerns, which singly appear to merit small regard; but all taken together constitute the character and substance of life.

Hence it happens that we rarely have the opportunity of exercising virtue or avoiding vice on a large scale. Our path does not lie among important affairs and great occasions. And if we think it of consequence to watch and act only on great occasions, we shall inevitably pass the chief portion of our time without doing any thing to keep or form a virtuous character. But character depends on the habitual tenor of sentiment and action, not on occasional efforts. A man is what he is always, not what he is sometimes. He may summon strength to resist a strong temptation, on some extraordinary occasion, and yet in reality be a slave to lust. He may have resolution in some pressing or splendid emergency, to do a striking act of beneficence, and yet, in ordinary cases, may be parsimonious and illiberal. And in all these instances he is to be judged by the *small things* he does *constantly*, and not by the *showy things* he does *sometimes*.

2. It is to be remarked, in the next place, that there is a close connexion between events. One leads to another, and no one stands alone. If slight failings could exist by themselves, without producing any results or affecting other parts of the character, it would be less necessary to make a severe account of them. But it is not so. The events of life are so many links of a chain — one draws on another, and that another, in indefinite succession. Every vice is one of a family; give admittance to the parent, and it will introduce the children; allow the intrusion of the offspring, and they will bring with them their companions, and we cannot tell where the troop of intruders will end. This process may be illustrated by the image under which the poet pictures the progress of self-love.

> Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake;
> As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
> The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds;
> Another still, and still another spreads;
> Friends — parents — neighbor — first it will embrace,
> His country next — and next, all human race.

This description — which, in the case of self-love, is not more than half true — represents very exactly the course of a small sin. It is but a little *pebble*, and yet it extends its influence, circle after circle, far beyond its own presence, you cannot tell how far nor how long.

We therefore must guard against the commission of small faults, because we do not know where their consequences will end, either as respects ourselves or as respects others. Take, for example, the thoughtless use of the tongue mentioned in the text. You indulge in a gay raillery of wit, or a sportive gossiping about your neigh-

bor's affairs and character. — Oh, you mean nothing by it, you say; it is but in sport. But the CONSEQUENCE may be, that you fix on him an ill name, or an opprobrious suspicion; the story that you have set in motion spreads in wider and wider circles, gathering as it goes, and proves his ruin. How many have in this way lighted a fire which they could not quench! Or consider the small fault of Thoughtlessness. Why, says the thoughtless man, one would suppose by the manner in which you blame me, that I had committed some great crime — murder, or theft, or blasphemy, at least, and yet it was nothing but thoughtlessness! Nothing but thoughtlessness! But, I prithee, what are the *consequences* of thoughtlessness? What are they likely to be, but a general neglect of duty? He that thinks it excusable to neglect one duty because he did not think of it, may find the same apology for neglect of another; and then by and bye there is no security that he will be thoughtful of any engagement or duty. Thoughtlessness grows upon one. If he deem it excusable at the age of fifteen, it may be his master at forty, so that he can be depended on for punctuality and fidelity in no case whatever. And then he may find, that through breaking this "least commandment," he has become "least in the kingdom of heaven."

3. Small faults are to be avoided, because we are so much the creatures of Habit. Every man knows how strong is the chain of habit, and how difficult it is to break it or escape from it. So much so, that the prophet has said, that for one accustomed to do evil to learn to do well, is as difficult as for an Ethiopian to change his skin or a leopard his spots. And how are habits formed? By

the repetition of single and small actions. Bad habits, by the repetition of single and small faults. These collected together, just as drops form the ocean, constitute a mass of iniquity, which is as heinous and ruinous as a great crime, and would be perceived to be so, if they could all meet the mind at once. There was a cruel punishment once used, in which the criminal was put to death, by the slow falling of successive drops of water on his naked head. Each drop of itself was a trifle; but they destroyed life at last as surely as the fatal blow of a heavy battle-axe. So each separate fault may be a trifle; but their continued succession will prove as ruinous to the soul as the commission of any capital enormity.

Take the sin of Peevishness, for example. No great crime, you say, to fret at disappointment, or vexation, or accident: who can help fretting, and what harm can it do? — But suppose that it become a *habit* with you — that you fret always, and at every thing — so that day after day and year after year, your ordinary accent is ill-natured and fault-finding, and your wearied family and harassed household drag on a comfortless existence at the mercy of your temper, which neither knows nor allows peace. — What say you then? Is it a small fault? Is this destruction of their happiness whom God sent you to render happy, is this any thing less than a *great* sin? If you had put slow poison into their daily bread, so that their lives should be sapped by inches, and wasted by a lingering death of twenty years — if you had defrauded them of their estate, so that they should live on in toil and beggary, — you would esteem yourself guilty of high crimes, and men would give them the fearful names of dishonesty and manslaughter. And how is it a less sin

to fill their lives with misery than with disease, to rob them of their happiness, than to rob them of their gold?

4. Small faults are to be avoided, because they are acts of disobedience to God; and, so far as this constitutes sin, are as sinful as greater transgressions. This is a very solemn consideration, and ought to be distinctly weighed. The considerations, which determine the degree of sin in any action, are many and various. The circumstances under which it was done, the opportunities of knowledge enjoyed by the person doing it, the strength of the temptation, the degree of resistance, the consequences which may follow; all these, and many things like them, are to be taken into account in judging of the magnitude of a sin. *The authority of God* is always one of these circumstances, and a most important one. And however a sin may be large or small in other respects, in this particular it is always the same — that is, when the authority of God is known. The Apostle James says, "He that keeps the whole law and offends in one point, is guilty of all." Why? Because he offends against the authority which ordained the whole, and which is just as much defied by the breach of one command as by the breach of all; and he thus evinces a disregard to that authority, which would lead him, under tempting circumstances, to break the other commands as he broke this. We may apply this principle to the present case. He that offends in small things, incurs the same guilt, so far as the law is concerned, as if he offended in large things; because he disregards that authority which equally requires the whole — and thus shows, that he only needs sufficient inducement, and he will break the greater as well as the less. It is not the authority on

which the law stands which restrains him. You will not lie, nor steal, nor defraud, nor perjure yourself; because these things are against the Divine law. But it is equally against the Divine law to live for selfish gratification only, to be unkind in the common relations of life, to omit the duties of usefulness and prayer. Why not, then, refrain from these? Is it any excuse for disobedience that you count them small things? Will the recording angel refuse to give them in against you? If they are not too small to be commanded, they are not too small to be done.

5. We must act from PRINCIPLE, and true principle is thorough and consistent. It knows no difference in point of obligation between one and another of God's commandments. It thinks no sin allowable which displeases him. It does not inquire whether an action be little or large, but whether it be wrong; not whether God will be displeased at all. It does not seek to discover how many sinful indulgences it may possibly do to retain, but how many it is absolutely necessary to put aside.

6. By indulgence in small sins we injure Religion in the opinion of other men. This is an important consideration for those who have at heart the honor of their faith. Let them consider it deeply. In no sense does a man live for himself alone. In no respect can he limit the influence of his conduct to his own person or his own happiness. Why is he to do right? Not barely that he may obtain a reward and save his soul, but for the sake of those around him, that he may promote their happiness and improvement. Why, too, must he avoid all sin, and strive for all righteousness? Not barely that he may obtain a reward, and save his own soul: but that he may

do service to others, that he may honor his religion, may exhibit a specimen of its operation, may render it amiable in the eyes of the world, and win other souls to its dominion. But this cannot be done by him who thinks small sins allowable. "Allowable!" exclaim the men of the the world; "why even WE are ashamed of *great* sins; honor, fashion, reputation, interest, keep us from heinous crimes; we allow the indulgence only of the smaller sins; and what does your religion do more? It is idle to boast of the superiority of your faith, if it will carry you no farther than this." What shall be answered to this sneer of the worldling? What reply can be made to it, by the man who esteems only the grosser transgressions to be matters of reproach? Any body can behave well on great occasions, and abstain from enormities when his character is at stake. The christian must go further. "For how can we expect people to believe that we are in earnest on great points, when they see that we cannot withstand a trivial temptation, against which resistance would have been comparatively easy? What if our general character be respectable? Yet if a nearer acquaintance disclose the same failings, littleness, and bad tempers which are found in the most ordinary persons — how deeply is Religion dishonored in their eyes!"*

7. There is one further reflection which should call to an earnest application of this subject; and that is, *the fact* that a good character is always acquired and always lost by little things. It is not built up in an hour; it cannot be thown down by a blow. It rises, like the vast buildings of ancient architecture, stone by stone, by gradual, patient, unintermitting toil. It decays slowly

* H. Moore.

like them when falling by the tardy tooth of time, sapped and undermined while you are unconscious of the operation. It requires, therefore, that you keep your eye upon it, and be diligent to maintain it in repair — not that you fold your arms, and say, at the first symptom of decay, "it is a little thing, let it alone." But all the ruins that time has ever made were by littles — all the ruins that *sin* has ever made were by littles. No one becomes suddenly corrupt, or is at once abandoned. It is a little step which begins the downward course, some slight indulgence, some unimportant omission, which gives him a taste for sin, and renders the next transgression easy. This may be illustrated in a thousand instances. It is verified in the intemperate man — no man ever became a drunkard but by the repetition of *small faults;* and now, behold how great a matter the little fire has kindled! It is verified in the idle man — a *little* more sleep, a *little* more slumber — and what next? "So shall poverty come on thee like a swift traveller, and want like an armed man." It is verified in the backslider — who once was a religious man — who once enjoyed the faith and peace of the christian promises — who once knew the happiness of communion with God, and relished the glorious truths of a spiritual life. Look at a man in such a state, and say where lies his danger? His mind is settled, his principles are fixed. Tempt him directly and openly to desert his religion, and he would laugh you to scorn; he would sooner think of death than apostacy; and if he falls away, it is by imperceptible gradations, by trifling indulgences, by occasional carelessnesses. First, perhaps, by omitting or slighting some small duty; then by allowing himself in some small sin. This lowers the re-

religious tone of his mind, and then another step is easy. The first symptom, perhaps, is thoughtlessness in prayer. Instead of correcting it, he passes it by as a slight matter, and therefore it increases. Then he omits the duty once; *once* is of no great consequence; and so he goes on, once more; and once more, till the omission becomes frequent, and ends in indevotion. We need not follow his decline; it is evident how easily he passes downward to indifference and irreligion — how truly according to the wise man's words — *He that despiseth small things, shall perish by little and little!*

In conclusion, let us not suffer these suggestions to die on the ear, but let us make a practical use of them. To neglect the improvement of *one* sermon, to slight the opportunity of *one* Sabbath, may seem to be a small thing. But let us apply the doctrine of the discourse to the discourse itself, by immediately adopting its instructions; *and who can tell how great a matter this little fire may kindle?* Let us faithfully apply it, and we may look for vast results. Let us keep an eye to every moment and every action, and we shall find a high attainment in virtue and religion to be the final consequence. And surely — if the avaricious man, by attention to small gains and insignificant savings, will painfully collect together heaps of treasure till he dies in possession of immense wealth; if the ambitious scholar, by the frugal use of moments, and by resolutely employing the little fragments of time which other men throw away, will make himself a prodigy of learning; then surely we should be deeply ashamed if we are not willing to endure the same carefulness and toil, in pursuing a treasure greater than all earthly wealth, and a distinction beyond all earthly ambition. *They* do

it for an earthly reward — we should be willing to do it for a heavenly. They do it to gratify their passions and their taste, and they cannot succeed without it. Neither can the Christian succeed without it; and therefore we should be ready to devote ourselves to it, that we may please God, and find acceptance at last. Let it not be said, that all self-denying industry, all true calculating wisdom, is employed in the business of the world and for worldly ends; but let us bring the same wisdom, the same industry, into our religious engagements.

1st Series No. 190.

"WHAT THINKEST THOU?"

OR

TEN QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

By Rev. SAMUEL BARRETT.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

May, 1843.

Price 3 Cents.

In adopting the following Discourse as one of this series of Tracts, it has been thought best to retain unaltered the form of direct address in which it was delivered from the pulpit.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER,
SCHOOL STREET.

WHAT THINKEST THOU?

We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest.—Acts xxviii. 22.

There are several topics of religious doctrine and inquiry, concerning which a desire of this sort is often expressed to me in private, and I have been induced to believe that it would not be altogether unacceptable to a portion at least of my hearers, if the views entertained by me on some of those topics should be stated in detail and in a single discourse from the pulpit. But before attention is turned to the points chiefly to be dwelt upon, let me be indulged in making a few remarks of an introductory kind.

The opinions I hold, in common with liberal Christians generally, are, as you know, in several respects unlike those which prevail in many parts of our country; and the question is very naturally asked by some persons, "How shall we, who have not much leisure for personal investigation, be enabled to judge between the conflicting claims of different systems?" To which I reply by

suggesting two simple, easy, and safe rules. In the first place, compare the prominent features of those systems with the leading principles of the Christian religion as it was originally inculcated from the lips and manifested in the life of its Divine Author. Not much either of time or of labor is required for this; and as the Son of God is the acknowledged Master, it must seem obvious to you, that the theory of faith and practice which embraces all that he taught and exemplified cannot be essentially defective, and that any one containing more may, in proportion to the excess, be false and injurious. In the second place, glance at the chief points of the proposed systems, that you may see how they are adapted to man's nature. God, of course, is the author of this; and to this, certainly, a religion in acccordance with his will must be suited. Now if, in examining the different schemes of theology offered to your notice, you perceive one of them to be fitted, in a higher degree than any of the rest, to meet the wants of our nature and to carry it forward to its perfection, then, clearly enough, you have reasonable ground for presuming, that it approaches nearest to the standard of the primitive gospel, and therefore best deserves acceptance. Or in other words, if in contrasting two formularies of doctrine and duty, you find that the one approves itself to men's common sense of truth and right, while the other shocks it; that the one demands the prostration of an intellect evidently created to be active and free, while the other encourages its efforts in all useful investigations; that the one, by disparaging, relaxes the moral powers, while the other, by its generous appeals, quickens and strengthens them; that the one, in making man's welfare to depend on vica-

rious expiation and imputed righteousness, obscures and renders doubtful the spontaneous sentiments of his soul respecting divine justice and human responsibleness, while the other, by its doctrine of recompense according to personal conduct and character, at once illustrates and sanctions his natural views of God's equitableness and his own accountability, thus affording suitable motives for sincere piety and true virtue; that the one so interprets nature, providence, and man's condition and prospects, as to add new and distressing anxieties to the unavoidable troubles of his lot, while the other connects, in such a manner, unerring wisdom and infinite benignity with the works of creation, with the order of events, and with the discipline and results of human life, that every painful agitation, except that of sin, is soothed to peace; that the one veils God's paternal attributes, and represents him in his character of Sovereign and Judge, as so stern, unrelenting, revengeful, that his creatures' love toward him, if awakened at all, must be a forced sentiment, their gratitude a reluctant offering, and their obedience a service of fear, while the other pourtrays him as a Father, infinitely tender and compassionate as well as all-powerful and just, consulting the highest good of his children, alike when he punishes and when he rewards, and therefore a Being whom it is not less delightful than obligatory to seek after, to worship and to obey with the whole mind and heart and life; that the one, in its account of man's destiny in the future world, recognizes but two divisions of the race, assigning to each a state of weal or of wo, at once arbitrary, fixed and unchangeable, while the other points to an infinite gradation of allotments, precisely accordant with actual differences of capacity, dis-

position and character, and provides for human progressiveness forever; — then are you not furnished with good reason for the presumption, that the former must be a departure from, and the latter is a near approach to, the standard of the pure gospel; inasmuch as God, being equally the maker of man and the inspirer of Christ, could not have revealed a religion through the one, for the use of, and yet unfit for, the nature he had given to the other? Commending these preliminary remarks to the consideration of such as need any hints of the kind to aid them in their inquiries, I proceed now to answer some of the questions upon which good minds are, as they ought to be, often exercised.

What thinkest thou of human nature? As Jesus Christ thought; at least, so to do is my endeavor. How did he regard it? Unlike enthusiasts at either extreme of modern speculation, he saw in our race the nature, not of gods nor of devils, not of angels nor of brutes, but of men and women — an order of beings holding neither the highest nor the lowest rank in creation, yet an elevated one; intelligent, free, and responsible; endued with capacities, powers and affections, designed and adapted, under appropriate culture, to produce virtue and happiness, yet liable, through neglect or perversion, to work out the opposites; innocent and pure at birth, fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven during infancy and childhood, but, as years advance and the process goes on whereby the faculties develope themselves and the character takes its shape and hue, subject to error and vice according as they are unfaithful to their nature and their God; actual sinners, to a greater or less degree, in mature life, and therefore needing in proportion as they are so, conversion, regene-

ration, renewal, to qualify them for the true and lasting welfare which they were created to be partakers of, and which the Saviour came into the world to help them to attain. And so to me human nature appears; a nature good in itself, yet liable to degradation; richly gifted for noble ends, but not exempt from the danger of being perverted to base issues; never reduced so low, however, as to be past hope, nor elevated so high as to be above progress; often tempted, often yielding to temptation, yet, under God, able to resist in the one case, and to recover itself in the other, borne down not seldom by sorrow, but having energy to throw off the burden, and, by divine grace, to gain from the trial new force and alacrity for virtue; a nature, in short, which, by neglect or abuse, may become exceedingly sinful and miserable, but which, true to itself, to its Creator, and to its destination, may rise to almost godlike excellence and happiness.

What thinkest thou of man's power relatively to the duties his Maker requires of him? It perplexes and grieves me, as it must you, to see, all around us, so much feebleness in the springs of moral action. Nevertheless, ever and far from my mind be the thought, that God sends any one of our race into the world devoid of capacity or ability commensurate with his obligations. To me, the Creator would seem worthy neither of respect nor of love, had he, the author of our nature and the apportioner of our duty, rendered the one inconsistent with the other; had he, in the spirit of the Egyptian task-masters, exacted obedience, and at the same time denied the power and the means. If man is, by any original defect or propensity of his constitution, — call it natural or call it moral, — impotent for virtue, then of course it is unjust, not

to say cruel, to require what is virtuous at his hands.— But so I do not believe him to be. He can choose the right, and he can pursue it; and this he feels, in every moment of calm, healthful thought. You cannot efface from his mind, by any fair method, the impression, that he has the power, so long as God sustains his life and faculties, to prefer good to evil, and to act accordingly; and every divine command, announced through revelation, does but sanction and enforce this natural conviction of his soul. Let it not be covered over and smothered by the rubbish of a false theology, that has floated down from the dark ages. Let it be one of the objects of all teachers, both public and private, to give to this view distinctness and prominence. True, men owe every thing to God — they depend on him from the cradle to the grave; but it is none the less true, if reason and scripture are not alike deceivers, that they are entrusted with powers and means proportioned to the duty required of them; and this fact must not only be recognized and assented to occasionally, as special heed is given in secret meditation to the voice of conscience and of the Spirit, but become a leading article in the common creed, and a generally acknowledged principle of practical life, before sin can be deprived of its most favorite ground of apology, and virtue permitted to avail itself of a motive, often and cruelly withheld, yet of great force.

What thinkest thou of sin and its consequences? In my view nothing beside, comparatively, is an evil. Sin itself shocks me more, if possible, than what are called its retributive judgments — so excellent is the nature of which it is the abuse, so noble the powers of which it is the prostitution, so great and good the Being whose will

it sets at nought. What is it but the voluntary throwing away of an innocence which, once lost, can never be recovered; the intentional staining of a purity, than which nothing should be held dearer; the wanton violation of conscience, that holiest of all man's faculties; the wilful defilement of the very image of God in the soul; the transgressing, on purpose and adversely to the most sacred obligations, of the righteous and beneficent law of the adorable Creator, the ever blessed Father of all? But the consequences of sin, as they are termed,— what is to be thought of them? I believe there is a law of God, by which guilt inevitably produces misery; a law of cause and effect in morals as well as in physics, which ever has been and ever will be in force; a law to which all human beings are alike subject, each in his own person, and by which every individual of our race has suffered, does suffer, or will suffer in proportion to his wickedness. It may be obscured by the pleasures of sin for a season; it may be forgotten in the delusions of selfishness; it may be disregarded in the eager pursuits of ambition; it may be spurned in the flush of successful fraud; but nothing can abrogate it. Its fulfilment may be delayed, yet not forever; it will flash in the lightnings of remorse, in future years, if not sooner, on the soul of every guilty one, however he may slumber over it or set it at defiance, now.— Nor is this law, in my view, confined to the present life; it belongs also, in all essential respects, to that which is to come. Sin on the other side of the grave, as well as on this, cannot fail to produce misery; and as every one's condition there will correspond, at any given period, with the character he possesses at that period, so whoever departs from earth a slave to vicious habits of thought,

feeling and conduct, must, on entering the spiritual world, find himself subject to suffering proportioned to his ill deserts. What, then, in the name of God, of conscience, and of happiness, is it wise for us resolve upon and to do, unless it be, — if innocent, to continue so; if virtuous, to persevere; if sinful, to repent and reform at once and thoroughly?

What thinkest thou of virtue and its rewards? Blessed they are, both the one and the other. I know of nothing better for man than the state itself of being virtuous — the consciousness, that he is acting up to the principles of the nature God gave him; that all his powers and affections are unfolding and exercising themselves orderly, vigorously, and in harmony; that his whole mind, heart, and life are fulfilling the wise and gracious intent of his Creator. And as if this were not enough, how many and interesting are the assurances, derived from divine providence and the inspired word, as well as from our own experience and observation, that no good deed, however irksome and unpromising, can a man perform, without afterwards, some time or other, enjoying its happy results. Often, indeed, the reward is distant, in part at least; but it is certain and of great value. Not only is virtue our highest interest, as well as our bounden duty, every day we live, but it is that which, in connection with faith in God and immortality, enables the mind to look with serenity on the grave. Just views of the future world forbid the expectation of arbitrary recompenses. Death cannot alter the qualities of the character; and there is no reason to suppose that the law of human happiness will be essentially different in heaven from what it is on earth. There, as here, man's chief good will consist

not in outward things — not in crowns, robes, harps, but in the purity, the holiness, the free, generous, devout activities of his own soul. Not only are virtue itself and its natural fruits the rewards of virtue, but there are none more appropriate, none more dignified, none more satisfying. What rapture does the good man experience, equal to that of the glow which filial devotion diffuses through his powers, as he raises his thoughts and affections to the gracious Father? What thrill of delight does the true disciple of the compassionate Jesus more desire to prolong, than that which prevades his heart, when he sees human misery lessened and human happiness increased by his disinterested toil and self-sacrifice? And so of the rest; to every department of moral and religious excellence the same law of spiritual blessedness belongs; and the dissolution of the body, so far from interrupting, does but further its fulfilment. When therefore the true christian approaches the dividing line between this and the future world, he looks beyond it, not anxiously, but with calm cheerfulness, believing that he shall find there a state of existence suited to his nature and his holy preferences. According as he feels that he loves his infinite Parent above and his brethren around him, in proportion as he has accustomed himself to devout exercises and benevolent actions, so he sees good causes for being serene, hopeful and happy; for the new sphere he is entering upon seems not strange and uncongenial to him; he is going as it were to his home, where he will find every thing agreeable to his tastes and habits, and where he will enjoy all the satisfactions for which his virtues have fitted him.

What thinkest thou of divine Providence? It seems to me that many persons ascribe too little to God. They

do not deny his agency altogether; he was active in creating the world; he subsequently and at sundry times revealed his might through miraculous interpositions; and some events even now, they suppose, are to be ascribed to the special exercise of his power, and these they call providential. But with such views alone, I am not satisfied. Reason and scripture bid me believe more. It is my conviction that throughout the material universe God works; that nothing takes place therein without him; that, strictly speaking, no power but his exists either in heaven or on earth, except that of the minds he has created; that what we call nature is not only his product, but the passive subject of his all-pervading, all-controlling spirit;—that were his energy for a moment withdrawn, every sign of life, activity, order, and beauty, now visible around us, would instantly disappear; that the laws of matter, of motion, of vitality, and the like, to which so much is attributed in popular language, are but the modes by which God produces the effects we witness; that, in the view of true philosophy as well as of religion, he is to be regarded as equally present every where, as alike active at all times, conducting the affairs of his vast dominions, by various methods indeed, but in conformity to one principle, namely, that of securing the highest good of his creatures. As to the question, therefore, so often put, in this shape or another,—"What is to be ascribed to the workings of providence, and what to the operations of nature?"—I hardly need add, that, to my mind,—however men may choose to classify and name occurrences,—there can be, in the sight of the Supreme Being, no ground for the distinction. All events,—if we except the volitions or acts of minds created free and responsible,—whether

viewed singly or in the aggregate, whether reducible by us to a prevailing law of uniformity or otherwise, whether taking place every day or only once in a thousand years, are the results of the omnipresent, ever active energy of God. In the least as well as in the greatest, in the most common no less than in the most rare, is the immediate exercise at once of his power, intelligence, and goodness. Nor let it be inferred from the exceptive words just used respecting mind, that I exclude this from the scope of divine providence. Mind, above every thing else, is dear to God, and it is the object of his chief care. I believe that he exists and acts in contact, so to speak, not only with here and there a soul and from time to time, but with all souls, every where, and always, yet never interfering with their free-agency; ready and desirous to assist them, but on the condition that they use their own powers, and voluntarily open themselves to the divine influences.

What thinkest thou of the chief end of God's moral government? The great object of the divine administration I believe to be, the forming of character; the educating of intelligent, free, responsible creatures, individually and collectively; the carrying of them forward, in knowledge, piety and virtue, to the perfection of their nature. Happiness is indeed a designed result; but it is the happiness which belongs to minds trained to pure and elevated thought, to hearts taught to glow with devout and generous affections, to lives won and wedded to the practice of holiness. Such being the end proposed, and no two nations, or communities, or individuals of men being alike, in respect either to capacity, disposition or advancement, the Father of all adopts different methods of discipline, suited to his children's various circumstances

and needs. Hence, this dispensation in one age, and that in another; hence, Judaism before Christianity; hence, too, the marked disparity as to national allotments in all ages, which has perplexed minds not heedful of the principle, that two or more sorts of people, of different conditions, propensities, and degrees of progress, cannot be elevated and improved by the same discipline. So also as regards families and individuals; some require for their spiritual growth one kind of exercise, and others another; and each needs dissimilar treatment in successive periods and unlike circumstances; — to all which diversities, the divine government, by its mingled indulgencies and severities, is adapted. Therefore it is, that we ought to regard what are called the lights and shadows on the ways of God, with equal faith and hope. We should welcome, as materials and motives of grateful joy, whatever may purify the thoughts and affections, open the soul to the incoming of good influences, add vigor to the moral powers, arouse the religious sentiments, deepen the sense of responsibleness, prompt to higher aspirations and endeavors — whatever, in fine, can animate, strengthen, exalt and sanctify our spiritual nature, whether it be pleasurable or painful. Often, it may be, our virtue and piety are best advanced by the interruption of what we call enjoyment; then it is the office of infinite love to permit our sky to be overcast. And perhaps there are no moments, when the enlightened Christian is more deeply sensible of his Maker's faithfulness, more vividly conscious of his Father's wisdom and kindness, more completely filled with the spirit of spontaneous, fervent dovotion, than when, the dark day of adversity being past, he feels how his perceptions and desires of spiritual

good have been purified and quickened, his faculties endued with new force for duty, and his entire self made worthier of God's love, and fitter for heaven's blessedness.

What thinkest thou of Christ and the cross? The Saviour of the world appears to my mind, as he revealed himself to his first disciples, not as God supreme, but as the Son of God, sent by the infinite Father of all to redeem our race from the evils to which they were subjecting themselves; divine in his mission, divine in his offices, divine in his works; "the Mediator of the new covenant;" "the Author and Finisher of our faith;" "the Way and the Truth," "the Resurrection and the Life." Next to the Infinite and Eternal One, I delight to honor and love Jesus; for he was the moral image of the Father; he exhibited every trait of godlike excellence; from his doctrine and life I can infer all duty, and in his predictions and destiny I can find encouragement for all faith and all hope. Precious to my soul, also, is the cross of Christ; not, indeed, for reasons sometimes given — not that God's wrath was appeased there; not that his love was purchased there; not that a vicarious expiation was made there: for such reasons have not a shadow of foundation in truth. But the cross is precious to me, — I would "glory" in it, as the holy Apostle did, — because thereon was the last, crowning manifestation of a most pure, noble, generous, godlike mind. Jesus, my blessed Saviour, died on that cross; and it is his exalted character, his inestimable worth, his transcendant merit, which invest it with all that is attractive and quickening. When I ascend, in thought, the hill of Calvary, my reverence, my admiration, my sympathy, my love — all the best feelings of my nature are awakened, because I am drawing

nigh to a spirit distinguished by every characteristic of true moral and religious excellence; because I see before me a being whose love has always flowed and still flows forth towards his friends, his enemies, and the human race, as the love of no other one, except the Father himself, ever did — a being who, with a devotion to God and duty stronger than a thousand deaths, voluntarily and cheerfully pours out his blood as water for the salvation of a sinful world. Hence the preciousness of the cross to me. It is excellence divine; moral greatness unequalled; unspotted purity, perfect virtue, matchless piety; the most disinterested, generous, noble self-sacrifice; love all victorious, all redeeming, all reconciling — it is these that, for me, clothe the cross with its unspeakable interest. Ever be it to my soul and yours, a symbol and a means of that true atonement — that making of us, in affection and purpose and endeavor, one with God — which it was the design of the Saviour's life and death to effect.

What thinkest thou of the "outward means of grace" — the sacred oracles, the Lord's day, the church, the ministry, the baptismal rite, the ordinance of commemoration? I believe them, in their true character and purpose, to be agreeable to the will of Christ and of God, and deem those men and women the wisest, other things being equal, who give to them the most careful heed. That the early Christians attached great importance to these external helps, history sufficiently shows; and I hold them to be as needful now, as they ever were, to man's moral and religious well-being and progress. The soul, in its healthy state, craves and grows by means of influences from without, as truly as the body wants, and is nourished by the food which it receives. Accordingly, he who

"knew what was in man" did not exclude from his religion those outward appliances, which suit our nature and help to the unfolding of its capacities and powers. In this, as in all things else, he manifested his divine wisdom, as the experience of nearly two thousand years abundantly proves. Refer me, if you can, to a single community that, in the absence of all institutions and observances, ever made much progress in what chiefly distinguishes man from the brute, and raises him to a resemblance to God. What would the inhabitants of this city have now been, if, unlike their venerated ancestors, they had, from the beginning, spurned from their homes and hearts the scriptures of divine revelation; had lived in habitual neglect of the Lord's day; had never reared the walls of a temple for social worship; had not at any time made provision for a stated ministry; had known no such thing as an organized church, with its solemn and affecting ordinances? Even now, abjure all religious rites; abolish the sabbath; class the bible with mere human compositions; close the doors of every sanctuary; put a stop to christian teaching, — and soon would the mass of the people, instead of advancing in true civilization, be fast going back to the degradation of heathenism. Human nature is great and glorious; but it is so only when cultivated as its Author designed it should be; and among the aids to its full development, perfection and happiness, I assign a high rank to what are called the outward means of grace. Let there not be one amongst us to undervalue them. The blessed sabbath — ever let it be devoted to the moral and religious improvement of ourselves and our children. The sacred volume of God's truth — reverently let its contents be pondered both here

and at our homes. This consecrated place of worship — hither let all of us, with one accord, come up, often as the first day of the week dawns. The church — let there continually be added to it such as are saved; and sanctified to us be its holy ordinances, till our Master shall invite us to sit down with him in his kingdom above.

What thinkest thou of the Gospel in its entireness, as regards its claims, sufficiency, and influence? It came from God; it breathes the spirit of God; it is accomplishing the purposes of God. I see in it the fulfilment of prophecy. I see in it proofs of supernatural power, wisdom and benevolence. I see in it qualities and tendencies which fit it to become, as itself declares that it will be, the religion of the whole world. I see in it whatever human nature needs in all conditions and stages of improvement — at once, affinities for the thoughts and feelings of little children, and subjects to task the strongest intellect and fill the largest heart; principles of renewal for the sinner in his lowest depth of degradation, and elements of progress for the farthest advanced in holiness; prolific seeds of civilization for barbarous tribes, and unapproached ideals of excellence for the most cultivated nations. But who may presume to speak worthily of Christianity? I am humbled and abashed in thy presence, thou divinest, most richly endowed messenger of God. Who that wants strength, who that wants motive, who that wants guidance, who that wants solace, who that wants hope, may not find it in thee? Thou hast truth for the understanding, invigorating and exhaustless; facts for the memory, awe-inspiring in respect to God, humbling as regards man, yet showing the one to be gracious, and the

other progressive; decisions for the conscience, yielding both light and impulse; objects for the affections, satisfying, because worthy and unchangeable and enduring materials for imagination, mysterious to awaken its curiosity, abundant to sustain its activity, substantial to curb its waywardness. And what art thou not doing, that can win for thee reverential respect and grateful love—whether inviting childhood to thy embrace, or ministering to the comfort of age; whether refining rugged ignorance, or consecrating polished intelligence; whether overawing the effrontery of successful guilt, or raising the drooping spirits of unfortunate virtue; whether subjecting to right principle the operations of industry, or supplying with pure thought the vacuity of suspended action; whether encouraging self-respect, fortitude, hope, and perseverance, in the habitations of poverty, or checking pride and luxury, and turning abundance into beneficent channels, in the mansions of wealth; whether visiting houses of mourning to change sorrow into a blessing, or circles of gaiety to prevent joy from becoming a sin; whether guiding life and health into the paths of piety and virtue and usefulness, or sitting by the bed of sickness and death, pointing to heaven, and whispering peace? Yes; and who, not past all feeling and faith, that sees thy divine ministrations, whenever or wherever a heart, a household, or a community yields to thy sway, but must be ready to exclaim, believing and rejoicing,—Lo! "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation."

And what thinkest thou of God himself? Language is all too feeble for an adequate answer. Who that has tried, in a right spirit, to approach the Infinite and Eternal, can express his thoughts and emotions in words? This

only can I say;—if at any time my mind has been penetrated with a sense of the profoundest awe and veneration, or if my heart has ever been filled with sentiments of unutterable love and gratitude, it was when meditating on the being and perfections of God. How could it be otherwise? Who, what is He? To me, he is without beginning, without end — the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. To me, he is uncaused, distinct from nature, personal and self-existent, possessed of limitless power, of unerring wisdom, of perfect goodness. To me, he is the all-creating, all-sustaining, all-guiding, all-disposing Mind; the omnipresent, omniscient, infinitely benevolent One; the Author of all life and the Source of all happiness; who provides for the daily returning wants of his creatures, from the greatest to the least, and sees that every thing, save what man's abused free powers make bad, is good. To me, he is the Parent of the human soul; the hearer and answerer of prayer; withholding from his children no spiritual good, which they have a capacity to receive and a disposition to use aright; rewarding the faithful and true with present satisfaction, and with opportunities for nobler exertion in future; and while he inflicts chastisement on the sinful, for their benefit, welcomes the confessions of the penitent soul, soothes its griefs by assurance of forgiveness, and encourages its aspirations for renewal and peace; unfolding before all, more and more, in proportion as they crave and qualify themselves for higher communications, his own infinite excellencies, the ever increasing capabilities of the human mind, and the blessed realities of the spiritual and eternal world. And should not such a Being be the object of our soul's deepest and strongest affections? I believe that to love him

with all the mind and all the heart, to consecrate to him our liveliest and holiest emotions, to bring all the thoughts and feelings into unison with his, and to yield him a perfect obedience, is the best satisfaction that can be enjoyed on earth, and which heaven will increase and prolong forever.

But enough. Such as I have been describing it, is my way of thinking on some of the leading topics of religion and theology. How scriptual, how reasonable, how well suited to the ends of man's creation and redemption, are the views that have been presented, my hearers will judge. For myself, I want nothing, can conceive of nothing, better; to me they are "the truth as it is in Jesus;" by them I can live, by them can die. Do you approve, do you adopt for yourselves the same simple, elevated, comprehensive, satisfactory theory of belief and duty? — let me say, then, in all earnestness, — O walk worthily of it, and be your life as pure, correct and beautiful as your faith.

1st Series. No. 191.

THE

EIGHTEENTH REPORT

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE ANNUAL MEETING,

MAY 24, 1843.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE & CO. 134 WASHINGTON STREET.

JUNE, 1843.

Price 6 Cents.

I. R. BUTTS, PRINTER, 2 SCHOOL STREET.

EIGHTEENTH ANNIVERSARY.

The American Unitarian Association celebrated its eighteenth anniversary on Tuesday evening, May 30th, 1843. The members met for the transaction of business at seven o'clock, in the Berry Street Vestry, Hon. Richard Sullivan, one of the Vice Presidents, in the chair.

Owing to the lateness of the hour, (the members having been detained at another meeting,) the reading of the records of the last annual meeting was omitted.

The Treasurer's Statement of Receipts and Expenditures was then presented and accepted.

Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the American Unitarian Association, from May 24, 1842, to May 30, 1843.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 24, 1842, as per account then rendered, ...		$492 10
From Auxiliary Societies and Subscriptions, .	3543 16	
" Donations and Bequests, ...	294 50	
" Societies and Individuals for Western Missions, ...	273 00	

From Life Members, ...	199 00	
" Subscribers to the General Agency, . .	40 00	
" Sale of Tracts, ...	229 67	
" Rev. H. Ware, Jr. collected by him, .	272 00	
" American Unitarian Association, amount transferred, being part of the Interest of the Permanent Fund, ...	700 00	
" Domestic Missionary Fund, being the amount appropriated by the Executive Board exclusive of $445, subscribed to the A. U. A. received through them, . .	1467 89	
		7019 22
		$7511 32

EXPENDITURES.

For Paper, and Printing and Binding Tracts and Books for distribution, ...	885 80
" Incidental Expenses, ...	145 52
" Salary of the General Secretary one year, .	1800 00
" Travelling Expenses of do., ...	100 00
" Rent of Office one year, ...	200 00
" Aid of Unitarian Society in Calais, Me. .	50 00
" " " " Augusta, " .	100 00
" " " " Standish, " .	75 00
" " " " Topsham, " .	75 00
" " " " Frankfort, " .	100 00
" " " " Saco, " .	50 00
" " " " Manchester, N. H.	100 00
" " " " Kensington and Hampton Falls, "	50 00
" " " " Tyngsboro', Ms.,	8 00
" " " " Chelsea, "	50 00
" " " " Cabotville, "	200 00
" " " " Chelmsford, "	100 00
" " " " Lincoln, "	50 00
" " " " Sharon, "	50 00
" " " " S. Natick, "	100 00
" " " " Southington, Ct.	100 00

" Aid of Unitarian Society in Rochester, N. Y.,	200 00	
" " " " Albany, "	100 00	
" " " " Chicago, Ill.,	150 00	
" " " " Manchester, N. H. for 1843,	150 00	
" " " " Augusta, Me., do,	100 00	
" " " " Topsham, " do,	100 00	
		$5189 32

For Missionary Services in Maine.

Rev. Richard Pike,	21 00	
" J. T. G. Nichols,	21 00	
		42 00

For Missionary Services in the West and South.

Rev. A. H. Conant,	190 00	
" J. Harrington, Jr.	10 00	
" W. G. Eliot,	141 65	
" M. I. Motte,	100 52	
" W. D. Wiswall,	30 00	
		472 17

For Missionary Services in New York and New Jersey.

Rev. H. Colman,	50 00	
" J. P. B. Storer,	100 00	
" E. E. Hale,	25 00	
" F. A. Whitney,	27 21	
		202 21

For Missionary Services in Albany, N. Y.

Rev. Richard Pike,	10 00
" H. W. Bellows,	19 00
" John Pierpont,	41 47
" J. P. B. Storer,	23 00
" R. C. Waterston,	10 00
" F. A. Farley,	22 75
" F. W. Holland,	28 00
" A. D. Jones,	40 00
" J. F. W. Ware,	10 00
" F. T. Gray,	20 00

Rev. Joseph Angier, ...	10 00		
		234 22	
Paid Rev. Mr. Hosmer for services rendered the Association, ...		10 00	
			6149 92
Balance on hand, ...			1361 40
			$7511 32

HENRY P. FAIRBANKS, *Treasurer.*

Boston, May 30, 1843.

The following sums have been appropriated by the Executive Committee, but not yet withdrawn from the Treasury, viz.

To Rev. Mr. Walworth for Missionary Services in Illinois, ...	200 00
To Rev. Mr. Van Tassel for Missionary Services in New York, ...	40 00
For Missionary Services in Towns on the Connecticut River, near Northampton, . .	100 00
For Aid of Unitarian Society in Chicago, Ill., .	75 00
" " " " Hillsboro' " .	200 00
" " " " Albany, N. Y.,	100 00
" " " " Greenfield, Ms.	100 00
" " " " E. Lexington, "	100 00
	$915 00

BOSTON, JUNE 3, 1843. The subscribers have examined the above account, and find it correctly cast and properly vouched.

THOMAS TARBELL, HENRY LORING, } *Auditors.*

The following officers for the ensuing year were then chosen.

OFFICERS
OF THE
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.
1843 — 44.

PRESIDENT.

Rev. Ichabod Nichols, D. D., Me.

VICE PRESIDENTS.

Hon. Joseph Lyman, Mass.
" Jonathan Phillips, Mass.
" Charles H. Atherton, N. H.
" Stephen Longfellow, Me.
Henry Wheaton, Esq. N. Y.
James Taylor, Esq. Penn.
Henry Payson, Esq. Md.
Hon. William Cranch, D. C.
" Samuel S. Wilde, Mass.
" Samuel Hoar, "
" Richard Sullivan, "
" Lemuel H. Arnold, R. I.
Benjamin Bakewell, Esq. Penn.
H. J. Huidekoper, Esq. Penn.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Rev. Artemas B. Muzzey, } *Directors.*
" George E. Ellis, }
" Nathaniel Hall, }
Rev. Charles Briggs, *General Secretary.*
" Samuel K. Lothrop, *Assistant Secretary.*
Henry P. Fairbanks, Esq. *Treasurer.*

Agreeably to the 10th Article of the Constitution, the following gentlemen were then chosen COUNCILLORS of the American Unitarian Association.

Francis Alger, Esq.
William T. Andrews, Esq.
R. W. Bailey, Esq.
Isaiah Bangs, Esq.
N. A. Barrett, Esq.
Rev. Samuel Barrett,
Rev. Andrew Bigelow,
Alden Bradford, Esq.
William Brigham, Esq.
E. Cobb, Esq.
C. K. Dillaway, Esq.
Hon. S. Fairbanks,
Rev. F. A. Farley,
Hon. Albert Fearing,
Dr. J. F. Flagg,
C. Francis, D. D.
Rev. Ezra S. Gannett,
Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood,
S. Greele, Esq.
Rev. James D. Green,
Rev. E. B. Hall,
Rev. Alonzo Hill,
James Kendall, D. D.
Alvan Lamson, D. D.
John Lamson, Esq.
Peter Mackintosh, Esq.
Samuel May, Esq.
Rev. Henry A. Miles,
Rev. J. H. Morison,
Geo. R. Noyes, D. D.
Rev. Samuel Osgood,
John Owen, Esq.
Francis Parkman, D. D.
Rev. Ephraim Peabody,
Hon. Jonathan Phillips,
Hon. Stephen C. Phillips,
Rev. J. Pierpont,
John Prentiss, Esq.
L. G. Pray, Esq.
Wm. Pomroy, Esq.
Rev. George Putnam,
Henry Rice, Esq.
Rev. C. Robbins,
John G. Rogers, Esq.
Henry B. Rogers, Esq.
Benjamin Seaver, Esq.
W. R. Sumner, Esq.
Rev. C. Stetson,
Hon. R. Sullivan,
Robert G. Shaw, Esq.
Rev. Moses G. Thomas,
Rev. J. W. Thompson,
James Walker, D. D.
Henry Ware, Jr. D. D.
Rev. Jason Whitman,
Hon. Sidney Willard,
Rev. A. Young.

At half past seven o'clock the Association proceeded to the Federal Street Church to attend the public exercises of the occasion. Prayers were offered by Rev. Mr. Hosmer, of Buffalo. After which the Report of the Executive Committee was read by the General Secretary.

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

We have now assembled on the Eighteenth Anniversary of this Association. We have met as Christian brethren and friends; — have come from different parts of the country, to strengthen the bonds of union and sympathy, — to encourage each other's hearts, and excite one another to increased fidelity and renewed exertions in carrying forward the great work in which we are engaged.

For some time after the Association was formed, its progress was slow. Its means of usefulness were comparatively limited; and it met with many discouragements. But as its principles and operations became more known, it gained in public favor; and is now receiving encouragement and support from a large portion of the denomination. It has, we believe, fully answered the expectations of its early friends. It has aided the cause of religious freedom; — checked the progress of unbelief, irreligion and sin; — sent the light and hopes

of the Gospel into the dark parts of our land; and done much to enlighten and bless, to sanctify and save our fellow-beings. A review of the past year affords encouragement, and inspires hope. We have sent abroad our publications and our missionaries; and done what we could to meet the religious wants of our brethren — "to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout the country." A missionary spirit has been awakened in our churches; we have done more for the support of Christian institutions; and we see throughout the denomination new signs of spiritual life, and a deeper interest in religion.

The labors of the Secretary have, in a great measure, been devoted to an extensive correspondence; to the Tract Department; to procuring a supply for vacant parishes; and to delivering addresses in behalf of the Association. He has, too, as far as he could be spared from his office, visited and preached to destitute societies in different parts of New England.

The Auxiliary Associations are generally in a flourishing condition; and are affording the Executive Committee essential aid in their operations. They have been multiplying from year to year; and are now established in most of our societies. Their members amount to not far from five thousand.

The number formed and re-organized the past year, is twenty. The number added to the list of life-members, is nine, making in all about four hundred.

It has been estimated that there are in the New England States from sixty to seventy destitute societies; and that in other parts of the country, there are at least fifty places where assistance is needed, — where missionaries

are loudly called for, and where societies are struggling hard to support the institutions of religion. From a large proportion of such societies and places, we have received pressing applications for aid. We have deeply sympathized with our brethren, who are thus deprived of Christian privileges; and have often lamented that, from our limited means, we could do no more towards relieving their wants.

We have afforded aid, during the year, directly and through our missionaries, to twenty-seven destitute societies — leaving a large number, for the present unaided. We hope, however, before long, to assist those whose wants are peculiarly pressing.

The number of missionaries employed by us the past year, is twenty. A large proportion of them, however, preached for short periods; and several only for single Sabbaths. It gives us pleasure to state that the blessing of Providence has attended their labors. Many have been interested in their preaching, and become regular attendants on public worship, who for years had neglected the institutions of religion; and many, from a state of indifference and coldness, have been awakened to new spiritual life. Had we the men and the means, we should rejoice to send out more laborers into fields which promise a rich and abundant harvest. May God bless the work; and raise up more and yet more, who shall enter upon it in the spirit of their Master — who shall go forth, as did the first preachers, in faith, and in hope; deeply imbued with the love of souls, and willing to spend and be spent in the holy cause.

We have published the past year from 60 to 70,000 Tracts. Between 5 and 6,000 have been received

monthly by the Auxiliary Associations and annual subscribers; and many have been sent abroad for gratuitous distribution. We have had applications for them from almost every part of the country. But they have been particularly called for from places where new societies have been recently formed, and a spirit of religious inquiry is awake; — as Albany, Rochester, and Seneca Falls, N. Y.; Southington, Ct; Geneva, Rockford, Warsaw, &c. in Illinois; Milwaukie, W. T.; Montreal, and other places.

A portion of the Tracts have been of a doctrinal character. This the Committee deemed to be important, because in many parts of the country our views are but little understood, and grossly misrepresented; strong prejudices exist against us; and we are not unfrequently denied the Christian name and Christian privileges. As a proof of this, we might quote from more than half of the numerous letters received by the Secretary.

A highly esteemed clergyman in one of the Southwestern States, who had been a popular preacher in another denomination, but from honest convictions, after learnedly and prayerfully examining the Scriptures, embraced our views, and is now preaching them with great power and success, writes thus, respecting the treatment he has received on account of his religious opinions.

"I have suffered in property, in feeling, in fame, and in prospects; but I am thankful, upon reviewing the last few years, that though I have suffered much, even many and great hardships; though my tears have often flowed in the silence of the night, and my heart bled over the wickedness and cruelty of men, yet I have much reason to rejoice and be glad before my heavenly Father. I have

sustained myself against my adversaries, and have experienced joy in the belief of the truth.

"There are some precious souls, some pure hearts, and single minds, who have already made themselves the champions and martyrs of the cause of religious freedom and rational religion in this remote section. Some, whose names might be written alongside with the suffering worthies of other days and other climes. They would not desire, however, to be brought before the public, for their witness is on high, and their record with their God; and they look to the heavens for their consolation."

As another proof that tracts explanatory of our views are yet needed, we will make a short extract from a sermon of Rev. C. R. Smith, published at Chicago, Ill., entitled, "Ruining Souls."

"Blood will be found dripping from the fingers of the Unitarian minister. There is no other way to heaven but through Jesus Christ; but Unitarianism robs the world of its Saviour, and thus destroys its last ray of hope. Cruel men, who, under the garb of piety, are striving to break the rock, which is alone sufficient to buffet the storms of the wrath of God. Unitarianism true, and the waves of the wrath of God would break over this world, and sink it in eternal despair."

We propose in our publications in future, and we hope the clergy will do the same in their preaching, to be more affirmative in stating the doctrines of Christianity. We have dealt in negations long enough. It is time now to give more positive views of those truths we so much value. They should stand out in bold relief on the printed page, and be proclaimed more loudly and emphatically from the pulpit; that every individual, who

reads or hears, shall be established in the faith, and able to give a reason for the hope that is in him.

Our missionaries in the West express a strong interest in that large and respectable denomination, called Christians. Their preachers read and study our books, and are so much in faith and spirit with us, that some of them are willing to labor as our missionaries. One of the more prominent of these preachers, Mr. Walworth, has been so highly recommended to us, that we have made an appropriation for him; and he will labor with us the coming year, as a travelling missionary.

In a letter to Rev. Mr. Conant, of Geneva, Ill., in reference to his becoming a "*Unitarian* Missionary," Mr. Walworth writes thus: —

"To relinquish the '*Christian*' name would add nothing to my usefulness, but would have an unfavorable effect upon the objects of *Christian union* among all liberal Christians in this country. The work of union is now well begun, and it is the wish of the Christians, (most of them,) to consummate it between themselves and the Unitarians; and nothing would more strengthen confidence and increase brotherly affection than the sympathy of Eastern Unitarians with us — struggling, as I think we are, in the same cause, and aiming at the same great truths. Can truth exist in but *one* form? Has the spirit of the Redeemer breathed only upon one name? I labor in my feeble way for the same sublime truths for which Channing labored and Ware wrote. Do we not all believe and teach that, to know Christ is to be assimilated to him? May we not, in this instance, give a practical illustration of our principles of Christian union and co-operation? It is true that we are Christian Unitari-

ans, and you are Unitarian Christians, and both, I trust, are laboring for the same object. *I* bear the reproach of being a Unitarian. I do not shrink from the name, (when properly applied) and certainly *you* do not decline the name 'Christian.' These are sounds. It is the principles at which we look; and in these we know there is not difference enough to prevent our mutual co-operation, and still each retain their respective standing with perfect consistency, harmony and kindness."

As to the name of our good brother, we can only say that there is none better; and do assure him that we would much sooner part with our own, dear as it is, than ask him to relinquish his.

As the Christians possess much of the spirit of those who were first called so at Antioch; as they are numerous and rapidly increasing — having ten years since, in twenty states, about one thousand churches, and one hundred thousand communicants, we hope much for the cause of religious freedom, truth, and holiness, by cultivating this friendly intercourse with them.

We have aided, during the year, in the establishment of several new societies in very important places; and a number of others are about being formed.

The Receipts of the Association, as will be seen from the Treasurer's Report, including the amount on hand at the commencement of the year, are seven thousand five hundred and eleven dollars, thirty-two cents, and the Expenditures and appropriations, seven thousand and sixty-four dollars, ninety-two cents. The missionary movement, as it has been called, or the effort to raise a certain amount of funds annually, to meet the religious wants of the denomination, we are happy to state, prom-

ises to be successful. Subscriptions were commenced, a few months since, and more than half of the proposed sum has already been raised; and in the course of the year the full amount intended, and even more, will probably be subscribed. Great credit is due to those gentlemen in this community, who, from a deep sense of Christian duty, commenced this work. They commenced it in *faith* — faith in God, and in man. They have been untiring in their efforts to awaken a missionary spirit; and they will not stop, nor rest, till they see the happy and glorious fruits of this truly Christian enterprise.

We hope to see in our churches more of religious action; for this will give religious life. And that we may all have a more realizing sense of the value of the soul — that we may show our faith by our works — show by our lives and conversation that we are Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth — that we regard religion as emphatically the one thing needful — that we have been with Jesus and learned of him, and our whole souls are imbued with his heavenly spirit.

We are forcibly reminded, by the place and occasion, of that dispensation of Providence, which, since our last Anniversary, has taken from us one of the earliest friends and supporters of the Association; one, who has done more for the promotion of our views of religion, than any man of the age; to whom we are all greatly indebted for the spirituality and life-giving influence of his writings, and for much that is precious and sustaining in our hopes.

The name of Channing will long be dear to the friends of truth and humanity. His loss to our denomination, our country, and the world, seems, indeed, *irreparable.*

We could not close without paying our humble tribute of respect to the memory of that truly great and good man, whom we so much valued and loved; who so much blessed us by his life, and instructed us in his death. May this dispensation teach us all lessons of heavenly wisdom. Let us realize that the time is short — that the night cometh — and whatever we do for the cause of truth and humanity, for the kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of men, let us do quickly.

Rev. Mr. Gage, of Petersham, addressed the meeting as follows:

Mr. President: — I rise to move the acceptance of that excellent Report. I congratulate the Association, on the evidence afforded by the Report, of the judicious and successful manner, in which the interests of our faith have been watched over, under the guidance of the Executive Committee, seconded by the faithful efforts of our Secretary. We have as yet, however, seen but in part, the good fruits of our holy principles. The seed sown has taken root, and is preparing to gladden our eyes, by a richer harvest than has yet been produced. Among the topics presented in the Report, I was glad to hear the clear and decided tones, in which was urged the importance of dwelling more fully upon the positive or affirmative features of our system. There are several topics, in this relation, (to two or three of which I will allude,) which have strong claims to our attention. Our holy faith urges upon us, with great earnestness aud seriousness, the cultivation of our Master's spirit; and thus, while commending the highest quality of the Christian character, it

tends to promote a good understanding among the disciples of Christ. Did Jesus urge any duty upon his disciples, more solemnly, than that of loving one another? Is there any declaration, in the New Testament, more emphatic, than that, by which we are told, if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his? And has any single circumstance been productive of more evil to the Church, or religion, than those discords and bitter contentions, which have arisen from the want of the spirit of Christ. It is good to labor to give efficacy to the sentiment, that the true struggle among Christians should be with ignorance and sin, and not with those, whose aim and endeavor it is, to discover and walk in that path, which leads through faith, duty and self-denial, on earth, to the rest and peace of Heaven. When the correctness of this sentiment (a vital element of our religion) shall be universally conceded and acted on, a light and glory will burst upon the Church and the world, second in brilliancy and power to that alone, which beamed from the Sun of righteousness.

I am forcibly reminded by this place, Sir, of a view of the moral capacities of our nature, which we consider important to the practical power of the Gospel upon the heart and character, and which we should, therefore, strenuously support and defend. There are views of our moral nature prevalent in the Church, against which the same objection may be brought, which was urged by Cicero against the philosophy of Epicurus, that there is nothing generous, nothing noble in them. The Christian life is denominated, justly, a warfare. Every encouragement should then be held out to the Christian soldier. And the Gospel, as we interpret it, is full of such encour-

agement. A man who enters upon a contest, strong in the justice of his cause, and in the belief that success is possible, will strain every nerve, and will come off a conqueror; while he, whose energies are crippled and hopes are damped by apprehensions of defeat, will be overcome. And, Sir, if you look for the source of those enterprises, which have shed the most benignant influences upon the world, you find it in the souls of those who have recognized, in human nature, the impress of God's hand; — and who, therefore, have been strong to attempt and persevering to accomplish great objects and ends. It was a remark of one, who has been called, on high authority, the Fenelon of England, (I allude to Addison,) that, when he arose from the study of Plato or Tully, he arose a wiser and better man; but when he turned to those Theologians who inculcated degrading views of the moral capacities of human nature, his soul died within him — he lost all courage and hope. And a greater than the Fenelon of England — one to whose voice these hallowed courts have echoed, for many years — a voice now rising in the courts of Heaven, in harmony with the strains of saints and seraphs, — always inculcated the importance (to the cause of truth and virtue,) of cherishing sound views of our moral nature. This house has often borne witness, that his soul kindled into angelic power, as he spake of this and kindred themes, — themes which demand an "angel's lyre, language of light — and sentiment of fire."

It is possible, sir, that in the discussion of principles and doctrines, the interests of piety may languish. But so it need not be. Controversy, judiciously and kindly

conducted, having for its object, to elicit truth, to settle principles, leads to a directly opposite result. It furnishes the Christian soldier with approved weapons of warfare. It selects and scatters that good seed, the heavenly truth, which alone can produce good fruit. As in the natural world, the lightning flash and thunder peal precede the fruitful shower; so the heat and noise of controversy may, sometimes, be the forerunner of a purer piety and a sounder morality. What is piety? The love of God. And what so eminently fitted to awaken the pure sentiment of love in the soul, as those moral qualities, which our Theology ascribes to our heavenly Father, love blended with compassion — justice tempered by mercy? How full of inducement to a fervent piety is our faith! Is it not, in every thing, fitted to awaken in our souls a true Christian zeal and devotion? Do not its great themes appeal to us in solemn tones of remonstrance and rebuke for our sins? Are we not taught by it, that a righteous retribution awaits us beyond the grave? And that a life of piety and virtue forms the best possible preparation for a death of peace and a hope full of immortality?

We need, positively, to insist upon the great principle of righteousness as the end and aim of the Gospel. If we rest our hopes of acceptance with God, upon our verbal assent to articles of faith, we may meet the dread rebuke — Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? The desert is beneath the warm influences of the sun — it drinks in the refreshing rains — but the beauties of vegetation — the mature and yellow harvests greet not there the beholder's eye. So that religion

is vain, which is not crowned by practical righteousness, shedding a fruitful influence over the whole path of life.

What we have this day witnessed in another place, shows that we believe that the social element of our nature may be made conducive to the furtherance of pure and undefiled religion. Coming to this city of our annual solemnities, from our various fields of labor and care, the reception given us, so full of kindness and sympathy, has strengthened and warmed our hearts. And are we not brethren, in the most sacred sense — devoted to the most holy cause, that ever awakened the anxieties, or called forth the prayers of the human soul? Are not the marks of a common parentage — the seal of the same adoption upon our spirits? Do not common dangers lurk in our souls, and lie in ambush around our paths? Do not similar duties claim our attention? Are not our thoughts aspiring to the same heaven?

The pure Gospel of Christ is committed to our trust. Souls, hungering and thirsting, are beseeching us to point them to the bread that came down from heaven, that they may eat and live, — to the living water, that they may drink and thirst no more. Let us thank God, as with one heart, that our faith is full of truth and purity. Let us remember, that we are bound to adorn it, by lives of piety, usefulness and virtue. And in our separate fields of labor, may we be encouraged ever by the hope of God's blessing; and by the belief — which we have so much reason to cherish, — that we have the sympathies and prayers of our brethren, for our fidelity and final triumph. And, as we unbuckle our armor and retire from the warfare, may we hear the voice of God coming to us, through the hopes of our faith,

"Servants of God, well done!
Rest from your loved employ;
The battle fought, the victory won;
Enter your Master's joy."

Rev. S. D. Robbins, of Chelsea, rose and thus addressed the Association:

Mr. President, — I rise, Sir, to second the motion for the acceptance of the Report, which I have listened to with deep emotion. Especially do I sympathize in the tribute of respect therein paid to the character of Dr. Channing, and in this house, Sir, I may be allowed to refer to my first interview with that great and good prophet, who has gone up unto his glory from the bosom of the Church, and the heart and hope of the world. Nine years ago, Sir, I remember well, the first time that I stood in that pulpit, from which, with holy eloquence, that honored and beloved disciple was wont to defend the cause of truth and love. I came as a simple village pastor; it was my earliest effort in a metropolitan pulpit. With humility and a childlike trembling, I beheld myself rising to address a multitudinous assembly, who had thronged the house of prayer, to hear the word of the good and the gifted father, whose departure has knit together, in the family affection of sorrows, our whole people. I can never forget the earnest interest with which he turned round to me, as I was waiting for him to preach, and said to me, as I hesitated in the choice of my discourse, "Take either of your sermons; they are all good enough, if you will speak out your whole heart." The discourse I chose was on the causes and remedy of spiritual indifference, and after the service he spoke with

so much kindness to me, and cheered me so cordially on my way, that I have ever felt the influence of his words as one of the greatest blessings of my clerical life.

I have listened with gratitude to the many illusions which have been made to his memory to-day, and have heard and read his eulogies with sincerest satisfaction. It were enough to immortalize Unitarian Christianity, that it hath given to the world the character of Dr. Channing. He was the world's, but in a dearer sense he was ours; and now he has passed up into that heaven so often pourtrayed by him as the home of humanity made perfect, — may his mantle rest on us all. It belongs to us to eulogize him by our lives, by carrying out the great principles which he so loved, and taught so well. The great problem of the present age is the application of Christianity to society. It was for this great work that the last hours and efforts of Dr. Channing were spent, and if we would honor him with an honor which his devoted spirit would accept, we must go forth and work as he worked for the salvation of humanity, and lay down our lives for the brethren, lift the degraded out of their ruin, and hold them up to the smiles of their Creator and their Father. The time has come when the recuperative energy of Unitarianism is to march forth to the work, — all the great questions which relate to man must be met, and they can be met by the spirit of our faith, as they can be met by no other redeeming power. This is sufficient to reach all the great momentous moving interests of the day,— the question of labor, of property, of liberty, of holiness, and of love, — they are all answered by the great doctrines which unite us, as they are answered by no other creed in Christendom. Brothers and friends,

the axe has laid long enough idle, at the root of the trees; let us take it up and wield it well.

Rev. Mr. Parkman, of Dover, N. H., then addressed the meeting.

I am glad to learn from the Report, and from other quarters, that there are many evidences of a new degree of zeal and spiritual life springing up in our denomination. I believe we need still more of these. I am not afraid of the charge of imitation, if new modes of increasing a religious interest in our body, are found adapted to that end. There may be much in the warmth and earnestness which others exhibit, which it may be well for us to imitate.

There is one tendency, however, it appears to me, which runs through most of the religions of the day, which I trust we shall avoid. The great want of the age is a more benevolent, a more philanthropic spirit. I fear that the absence of this, in many of the great religious bodies in this country, is perfectly compatible with much religious zeal, and with an earnest missionary spirit. To illustrate what I mean, (and the illustration will have pertinency, inasmuch as this Association, as a missionary body, may be called, as it has recently been, in the case of Savannah, to afford aid to feeble societies in the slaveholding states.) Imagine a run-away slave — the representative of his class — in New York or Boston during our great religious anniversaries. He has heard it said that the religion of the country is destined to overthrow all social abuses, and among them slavery. He enters a church, he finds there assembled the Baptist Association.

He hears a great deal said about the need of more religious interest and influence. Much, too, of the importance of sending missionaries into the destitute portions of our country at the West and South. What hope does this convey to his ear, in its bearing upon the condition of those whom "the Gospel is one day to set free."

The man who is most zealous in supporting the project of sending missionaries to the South, is the very one perhaps who wrote the last able defence of slavery as a Bible institution — he addresses a body in part composed of slaveholders, and of others who are in full fellowship with them.

He turns away sadly from these, and follows the crowd into the Methodist meeting-house. Here, too, he hears a similar strain of remark. What zeal, what warmth does he witness? How much influence must the great religious body here assembled have upon their pious brethren at the South, who hold his brethren in bonds? But can he gather much encouragement from all that he listens to, when he remembers that this very body has endorsed one of the vilest parts of the legal system of the slaveholder, viz., the principle that the testimony of a colored man shall not be received in a court of justice, by actually adopting it into their own church judicatories.

He goes to the annual meeting of one of the great orthodox associations — to hear tidings of great revivals which have swept through the land. He calls to mind how the master, from whose tyranny he fled, was a subject of one of these revivals. It would not be strange if the very individual who is to preach the annual discourse were one who owned several of the members of his own church. I might pursue with him the examination, how

far the religion of the country has a bearing upon the hopes of the slave, into further details, with a similar result.

How far are we — we, who have praised so much the departed Channing, for his boldness and fidelity to great principles; we, who have written on our banner, Liberty, Holiness, Love — how far are we in danger of imitating this guilty indifference towards this great moral question, while we strive to imbue our hearts with more of religious warmth and zeal?

This is called a religious land. Nowhere has the Church so much influence. Nowhere are there so many religious meetings — and in no land of similar light, are there greater social wrongs existing.

I read an account recently of the visit of a celebrated revivalist preacher to a Southern city. On a particular day, it was remarked, he had never been more earnest, more "evangelical." Crowds came forward to the anxious seats. In his pocket, all the while, was a pair of handcuffs intended for the poor girl, whom he was to carry back, on the morrow, to the Southern prison-house.

Is there not shadowed forth, in this preacher of that Gospel which enjoins justice and love towards all — the attitude of the American Church towards the claims of the oppressed — crying for more of warmth and zeal, and of missionary spirit, getting up revivals, — while the slave groans on — his oppressor unrebuked. Are not the same false views of religion alluded to in our Saviour's parable? Humanity, in the person of the slave, "stripped" of everything, save the ability to suffer and to *work;* — lies bleeding — the Christian priest passes on; he is on

his way to a great missionary meeting, or to one at which they are to consider the wants of his denomination, or he is going to preach the Gospel; and what has *that* to do with such as he?

The Levite is an anxious inquirer — lost in thought while pondering the question, How shall I work out my own salvation? He, too, would hardly believe that the Gospel was preached, if it did not address exclusively the selfish principle of his nature. Let us seek for zeal and for earnestness, whether the measures to be employed are old or new; but heaven deliver us from that spurious piety, which, while it is full of these, turns its back on human suffering.

Let us, we, who have said so much, and truly too, of the influence we have exerted in staying the progress of infidelity — remember, that there is an evil spirit moving to and fro in the community, — which scoffs at things we call holy, which cannot be exorcised by good words — or by even well-grounded pretension to zeal and earnestness. It hears these from all quarters, and asks none the less, Can that be Christianity which never utters its protest against slavery and war, and other forms of social injustice and violence?

But what can we do? I answer, slavery, like everything else which is clearly wrong, must be done away by public sentiment, in which the religious element must have an important influence. We are small in numbers, but we surely have some influence on public opinion. What a mark on the world's history have the small body of "Friends" left, chiefly because of the ground they have always taken in respect to the great moral questions of their time.

We cannot use the same means of influence, which some churches of other denominations have employed, whose ties of connection with Southern churches are much stronger than those which connect us to them, and more especially whose views in respect to the Lord's Supper differ from ours — but we can do what I will now venture to propose in the form of a resolution.

He then offered the following resolution: —

Resolved, — That the Executive Committee, whenever affording aid to a society in the slaveholding portion of our country, be directed to accompany such aid with a solemn protest against the sin of slavery — and that they employ no preacher, who they have reason to suppose will defend that institution.

After some very interesting remarks by John C. Park, Esq., which, we regret, could not be furnished for publication, Rev. Mr. Arnold addressed the meeting as follows:

Mr. President, — I know not that I do well, or that I venture not too far, in attempting to speak, without preparation, before an audience to which I am almost entirely a stranger; but really, Sir, I could not resist the promptings of the Spirit. Coming from a State, where I am the only clerical representative of our faith, — the land of the Edwardses and the Dwights, where Calvinism has luxuriated for ages, and where, at present, misbelief and no-belief, indifference and bigotry strike churches and individuals with a mortal paralysis; and meeting here so many sympathizing friends, and hearing so many encouraging words, I should do violence to the

feelings of my heart, did I not give utterance to the fulness of its emotions.

I do not rise, Sir, to speak with reference to any particular part of that very excellent Report, which we have just heard, but to offer a few remarks on the spirit which pervades *all* its parts. Sir, it is the spirit of hope. It speaks great and encouraging things for the cause of renovated Christianity, which should make us glad. It opens to our faith a future; — a future baptized in rainbows, and bright with the radiance of heaven. But, Mr. President, there are other voices, besides those which rise ever and ever more earnestly from the bosom of our own churches, and which are concentered in the one voice of that Report. There are voices with the world without, on every hill, and in every vale, in town, country and city, which speak hopefully to us.

I was present, this morning, at the annual meeting of the Mass. Prison Discipline Society, and heard there, also, a loud voice of hope. When I looked around over the immense assembly, and saw how sincere, and deep, and universal was the pity felt for even the miserable victims of crime, I confess my bosom glowed with new and brighter hopes, and my heart throbbed with a truer and warmer sympathy. And in those eyes beaming with mercy, and countenances eloquent with pity, one might hail the aurora of a happier day, which is about to rise upon the human race. And when I contrasted the present with the past; — the wide and active charities and humane institutions, and philanthropic associations of these modern times, with the cool barbarities, and legalized injustice, and crushing despotisms of former periods, I felt, in common with thousands of others, that

humanity *was going* forward, that the golden hours were coming, and that Saturn and Astrea would, in very deed, descend to our earth with celestial gifts, and thus realize the beautiful myth of the old poets.

But one may ask : — What has all this to do with that Report ? — with the objects of this meeting ? — with the cause of liberal Christianity ? Precisely this. All these philanthropic movements for which the present times are so remarkable, indicate that a great idea is struggling in the heart of society, demanding a more worthy development in all the forms of religion and life. They teach us that the spirit, the life, the hopes of the present age are far in advançe of its theology. The spirit which presides over the operations of the Prison Discipline Society, so diligent, so unwearied in seeking new methods by which society may punish crime, and yet be merciful to its victim, stands in direct opposition to the idea of the creeds of probably three-fourths of the members of that Association. All these associations, though many of them may be premature and ill-conducted ; — all these innumerable voices, that rise from world conventions, chartist assemblies, Washingtonian gatherings, though many of them be as stern as the tempest, and rude as the storm-lashed sea, proceed from the same spirit. They teach us, if we will so have it, that the world is ready to recognize these two ideas, viz. — that man and society are destined to advance unceasingly to the higher and better ; and, that the human soul *is*, as Christianity asserts, God-created and God-preserved ; and, though sunk in the deepest pollution and degradation of sin and ignorance, is worth laboring for ; aye, and dying for !

Now what I wish to say, is, that our exposition of

Christianity is the only existing religion, which gives an expression to this spirit, — it is the only one, which responds to the ideal of the age. This, Sir, is a great question, and deserves to be well considered by us. Every modern sect founds its theory of religion, upon the assumption that *it* has fully comprehended the immense idea of Christianity ; — that it *can*, with a glance, take in the whole thought of the Saviour. But such assumptions degrade the Gospel. So full, so complete, so absolute is the Christian revelation, that it stretches down through *all time*. It is a fountain of living water, ever welling up with increased power and freshness. The ages, as they roll on, evolve new truths, and sublime views from that astonishing record. The Christ is *not* sleeping the death-slumber in the tomb of the past, sealed up by authority, and guarded by armed sentinels. He LIVES, and *teaches* in the midst of humanity! Millions of pious souls recognize, in the public charities, and benevolent associations of the times, the pulsations of his great heart, and millions of arms move by the inspiration of his mighty Spirit. In each age, he points society to a nobler elevation, to be won ; the earnest soul, to a loftier ideal of perfection, to be realized. Now every sect, which embodies its own imperfect conceptions of the Gospel in a creed, and asserts that creed to be a true expression of the mind of Christ, — a rule which shall bind all the future in matters of faith, does by this very act, virtually deny the divineness and completeness of the Christian religion, and preclude the very possibility of advancement. This is the vice of all present theologies. And yet, among all blasphemies against the spirit of truth, is there none so damning, as this very attempt to

chain Christianity to the insignificant circle described by human formularies.

It is the glory of Unitarianism, that it accepts this fact of progress, and is in sympathy with the advancing movements of the day. It lays no fetter on the soul. When asked for its creed, it presents no human document, but points to the life and teachings of the Son of God. It accepts the revelation of Jesus, as the highest, holiest, and completest manifestation of divine love; yet it leaves the *manner* of approach to the Father of Spirits open and free to each individual mind. It thus sympathises with the wants of the soul; — it leaves room for progress.

Nor is our faith less distinct, in its utterance of that other sentiment, which breathes in all the movements of modern society; — *the measureless worth of the immortal soul.* It has ever frowned indignantly on all low and degrading views of human nature. Ever has it looked with a jealous eye upon every small estimate of the human faculties. It is not, indeed, blind to the actual vices of man or society. It sees and mourns over the vast depravity into which man too often plunges himself, but beneath all this deep corruption, these debased affections, withered sympathies, paralyzed powers, it discovers the germs of a better life; — a moral principle, which, if properly developed, will exalt him to the dignity of a seraph.

Unitarianism is, therefore, the truest expression of that Spirit which now inspires every department of life; — religion, science, industry, the arts; — it is the faithfulest interpretation this century is destined to witness, of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour. And, although the number of its nominal disciples is by no means large, its

creed is writ on the brow of all modern literature; — is proclaimed by the voice of the ages. The fires which burn upon its altars, are kindled at the beams of the star of Bethlehem. Sympathizing thus with the deepest thought and life of the times, it is capable of putting forth an influence, wide as the circle of Christendom.

And what, Sir, are the duties and obligations, which these facts impose upon us? The first fruits of the harvest; the first to comprehend the idea of the age, our office is that of apostles; and this imposes upon us painful, yet high and holy obligations. We are not only to destroy, but create; clear away the rubbish of error, but also to develope truth, and bring man back to faith, love, holiness. The Land of Promise is before us; but we must subdue it. Yet, when we shall have destroyed the Amalekites, and driven out the giant progeny of Anak, our labor will not be done. It shall still be our work, to raise on Zion the temple of a more spiritual and living worship; to kindle anew the *heaven-fire*, on the altar of the One God!

I listened, Sir, with great pleasure, to the earnest and eloquent words of our lay brother, (Mr. Park,) who preceded me. Most cordially do I respond to the general spirit of his remarks; yet one thing he said, which I cannot approve, — nay, which I very much disapprove. And the feelings in which that remark originated, is the chief error of our denomination, — the greatest, and nearly the only evil we have to contend with. I mean the fear, which prevails so extensively amongst us, of sectarianism. Sir, are we not Unitarians? — and is not this a meeting of the Unitarian Association? Yet our brother pronounced the word apparently with a most painful re-

luctance, and with an apology for its use, as though it were the profanest of terms. I do not and *cannot* approve this feeling. I love the pure and simple faith of the Gospel, and glory in the name of Unitarian. If we believe our doctrines to be "the faith once delivered to the saints," it is our duty to preserve those doctrines; — to labor for their diffusion in the world. We should give to our faith a strong BODY, — an efficient organization, in other words, a CHURCH. We should consolidate our scattered strength, — create a spirit of sect, — blend all our separate and independent communions together in one Church. And this we may do without violating one principle of liberality. We may be true to ourselves, and yet exercise Christian charity towards others. With us, Congregationalism has achieved its end, by transforming us into very Ishmaelites, bound together by few ties, and having in common but few sympathies. We must leave this position, or we cannot exist. Individualism may be beautiful enough in idea, but, in practice, it has ever been, and ever will be but another name for selfishness. Already it has struck many of our churches with a mortal coldness.

By united, earnest, and unwearied efforts, we may hope to do something for the redemption of souls. Let no Unitarian flatter himself that the day of toil is past. It is not so. There are mountains of error yet to be removed. The world is yet to be redeemed from sin. A deep and mournful voice rises from the very depths of society, calling to *us* for help. There are multitudes whom no faith but ours can reach. There are thousands, of the gentle and timid, who have fallen into darkness and doubt; — there are tens of thousands of strong spirits, who are

plunged into the dark abysses of unbelief. These must be redeemed, and if redeemed, must be redeemed by us. And what will be our fate, if we shrink from bearing and uttering the God's-message, committed to our charge? — if we flee from the labor to which the spirit of the age calls us? — to which the Saviour hath appointed us? Will not that spirit cast us out, and trample us down as unprofitable servants? Will not Jesus deny us before the Father?

W. H. Channing, of New York, rose and said, — We must all sympathize in the earnest feeling which dictated the words of the last speaker. It is refreshing to hear laymen, warm from the struggles and temptations of actual life, bearing their testimony to the strength and peace inspired by religion. It is a good sign of the increased vitality of all denominations, that laymen are more and more becoming ministers of truth. But there are some tendencies in the piety now strengthening in our churches, which seem somewhat unhealthy. We are attempting to revive what our Orthodox friends have manifested in a vigor and fulness we never shall approach, and which it is desirable we should make no attempt to renew. We do not need to-day a piety of sentiment, so much as a piety of deed; not one of rapture, but of calm energy; which confesses past errors by reforms in conduct, and proved its increasing prayer by fidelity. We need to-day the worship of joy, not the worship of sorrow; — of joy in the conscious presence of infinite goodness, truth, and power, through nature, society and the soul forever renewing us; — of joy which, while thankful, hopes for more perfect fulfilment of divine order, and feels that the

worst sin is fear. Let us have a worship of deeds. The church we need is the church of Humanity, where the ministering priest is Love, and disinterestedness the daily sacrifice. We need that the church should be wedded with society, in indissoluble union. They have been too long divorced; and by the separation religion has lost its body and society its soul. Let our increased zeal for Christianity show itself in our practical applications of its principles to actual life. Our faith dies, because we do not the works it commands. Let us show our faith by our works, and new inspirations of truth and goodness will refresh us forever. What we need most is fidelity in social and individual action. We have been called a conservative body. Let us understand that the only true conservatism is growth. The great doctrine of Christ is that we should all be one; let us prove the possibility of united interests; let us solve the problem indeed here, though all the relations of capital and labor, of commerce internal and external, of justice in production, and justice in distribution, we may make society work for the individual, and the individual for society. A resolution is to be presented to-night, which will give us the opportunity to test our principles. We believe that God is the Father of all, that men are brethren, that this life is the scene of education and immortality. Let us apply this practically by our condemnation of American slavery. If we are not prepared to say, that slavery, wherever it exists, is a violation of all justice, divine and human, then is Unitarianism an empty profession.

OFFICERS

AND

COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL.

The annual meeting of the Council of the Association was held June 1st, 1843, at 4 o'clock, P. M., in the Berry Street Vestry. Hon. Richard Sullivan was chosen Chairman, and Rev. Alonzo Hill, Secretary of the Council for the ensuing year.

The Chairman then nominated the following gentlemen for the several Committees.

On Finance — Hon. Stephen Fairbanks, Samuel Greele, Esq., Rev. S. K. Lothrop, Lewis G. Pray, and Samuel May, Esq'rs.

On Missions — Rev. Caleb Stetson, Rev. Dr. Parkman, Rev. A. B. Muzzey, H. B. Rogers, Esq.

On Parishes — Rev. Dr. Walker, Hon. Jona. Phillips, Rev. E. S. Gannett, Rev. Samuel Barrett, William Pomeroy, Esq.

On Tracts — C. K. Dillaway, Esq., Rev. Andrew Bigelow, Rev. E. Peabody, Rev. Convers Francis.

On the Anniversary — Rev. Alexander Young, Rev. Charles Briggs, William Brigham, Esq., Hon. Sidney Willard, Rev. Alonzo Hill.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1. The name of this Association shall be THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

2. The object of this Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

3. Unitarian Christians throughout the United States shall be invited to unite and co-operate with this Association.

4. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription shall be paid; and a subscription of thirty dollars shall constitute a person a member for life.

5. The officers shall be a President, fifteen Vice-Presidents, a General Secretary, who shall have the care of all the business and interests of the Association under the control of the Executive Committee, an Assistant Secretary, who, in case of the absence or sickness of the General Secretary, shall perform such duties of a Recording and Corresponding Secretary as may require immediate attention; a Treasurer and three Directors.

6. The Directors, Secretaries, and Treasurer shall constitute the Executive Committee, who shall meet once in each month, and shall have the direction of the funds and operations of the Association.

7. An annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall deem advisable, of which due notice shall be given, and at which officers shall be chosen, reports be made, and any other business be transacted, which may come before the Association.

8. The Executive Committee shall have power to fill any vacancies which may occur among the officers between any two annual meetings.

9. Any amendment of this Constitution shall be proposed at one annual meeting, and may be accepted at the next anniversary, if two-thirds of the members present be in favor of such amendments.

10. There shall also be a Council of the Association consisting of not less than twenty-five, nor more than ——— members, to be nominated by the presiding officer, and chosen by a hand vote at the annual meeting, whose duty it shall be, whenever it is necessary, in conjunction with the Executive Committee, to consider and determine what further measures may be taken to increase the usefulness of the Association, by what means they may be carried into execution, and in what manner funds can be provided for the purpose. The Council shall hold a stated annual meeting on the Thursday succeeding the annual meeting of the Association, at four o'clock, P. M. The Executive Committee shall call special meetings whenever they shall deem it necessary, or at the request of any five members of the Council; and twelve members shall constitute a quorum. The powers of the Executive Committee with regard to all matters not acted upon by the Council are to remain the same as heretofore.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, September 23, 1826, as amended March, 30, 1830.

Resolved, That every member of the Association be entitled to one copy of every tract *of the first and second series* published by the Association *during the year for which his subscription is entered.*

Vote of the Executive Committee, passed January 4, 1826.

Voted, That no society be recognized as auxiliary to this Association, the terms of subscription to which are less than those required in the Constitution of this Association.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, June 20, 1833.

Voted, that the 4th article of the Constitution be so construed, that any one who shall pay thirty dollars for the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association, either at once, or by annual instalments within five years, shall be considered a life member.

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

The following Clergymen have been made members for life of the American Unitarian Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

Abbot, Abiel
Alden, Seth
Alger, Horatio
Allen, Joseph
*Andrews, William
Arnold, A. C. L.
*Bancroft, Aaron, D. D.
Barrett, Samuel
Bartlett, John
Barry, William
*Bascom, Ezekiel L.
Bates, Reuben
Bellows, Henry W.
Bigelow, Andrew
Brazer, John, D. D.
Briggs, Charles
Brooks, Charles
Brooks, Charles T.
Brown, Addison
Buckingham, Edgar
Burton, Warren
*Channing, Wm. E., D. D.
Clark, Amos
Clarke, Samuel
Cole, Jonathan
Colman, Henry
Coolidge, J. I. T.
Crafts, E. P.
Crosby, J.
Cunningham, Francis
Cutler, Curtis
*Damon, David
Dewey, Orville, D. D.
Doggett, Theophilus P.
Edes, Henry, D. D.
Edes, Henry F.
Edes, Edward H.
Emmons, Henry
Everett, O. C.
Ellis, George E.
Farley, Frederick A.
Field, Joseph
*Flint, Jacob
Flint, James, D. D.
Fosdick, David
Fox, Thomas B.
Frothingham, William
Frost, Barzillai
Furness, William H.
Gage, Nathaniel
Gannett, Ezra S.
Gannett, Thomas B.
Gray, Frederick T.
Greenwood, F. W. P.
Hall, Edward B.
Hall, Nathaniel
Hamilton, Luther
Harrington, Joseph, Jr.

*Dead.

Hedge, F. H.
Hill, Alonzo
Holland, F. W.
Hosmer, George W.
Howe, Moses
Huntington, Frederick D.
Ingersoll, George G.
Johnson, Rufus A.
Kendall, James, D. D.
Lamson, Alvan, D. D.
Lincoln, Calvin
*Little, Robert
Livermore, A. A.
Loring, Bailey
Lothrop, Samuel K.
May, Samuel, Jr.
Merrick, J. M.
Miles, Henry A.
Moore, Josiah
Motte, Mellish I.
Muzzey, Artemas B.
Newell, William
Nichols, Ichabod, D. D.
Noyes, George R., D. D.
Osgood, Peter
Osgood Samuel
Palfrey, John G., D. D.
*Parker, Nathan, D. D
Parker, Theodore
Parkman, Francis, D. D.
Parkman, John
Peabody, Wm. B. O.
Pierpont, John
*Phipps, H. G.
Putnam, George
*Ripley, Ezra, D. D.
Ripley, George
Ripley, Samuel
Richardson, Joseph
Robbins, Samuel D.
Robbins, Chandler
Robinson, Charles
Rogers, T. F.
Sanger, Ralph
Sears, E. H.
Sewall, Charles C.
Sewall, Edmund Q.
Shackford, C. C.
Simmons, George F.
Smith, Amos
Stebbins, Rufus P.
Stetson, Caleb
Storer, John P. B.
Sullivan, Thomas R.
Sweet, John D.
Thayer, Christopher T.
*Thayer, Nathaniel, D. D
Thomson, James W.
Thomson, James, D.D.
Waite, Josiah K.
Walker, James, D. D.
Ware, Henry, Jr., D. D.
Ware, William
Wellington, Charles
*Wells, George W.
*Whitman, Bernard
Whitman, Jason
Whitman, Nathaniel
Williams, George A.
Young, Alexander

OTHER MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

Abbot, Samuel
Abbot, Miss Abigail
Abbot, Ezra
Adams, Benjamin T.
Adams, James, Jr.
Adams, Philip
Alger, Cyrus
Alger, Francis
Ames, Seth
Ames, David W.
Ames, Mrs. David
Andrews, Ebenezer T.
Aspinwall, Samuel
Atherton, Charles H.
Appleton, Nathan
Appleton, Charles T.
Appleton, Francis
Ball, S. S.
Bancroft, Mrs. B. D.
Bangs, Josiah
Barrett, Nathaniel A.
Barker, Joseph A.
Baker, Henry F.
Bigelow, Alonson
Bigelow, John
*Bird, John H.
Bixby, Miss Keziah
Blanchard, Hezekiah
Blake, Mrs. Sarah
Bliss, Theodore
*Bond, George
Bond, George W.
*Bowditch, Nathaniel
Bowles, Samuel
*Bradlee, Joseph P.
Bracket, Samuel E.
Brooks, Peter C.
Brewster, Oliver
Brewster, William
Cartwright, Charles W.
Carew, Joseph
Chapin, Harvey
Chapman, Mrs. Jonathan
Chapman, Mrs. Margaret
Clapp, Joshua
Colton, George
*Cotton, John
Cotton, Joseph, Jr.
Cobb, Elijah
Coffin, George W.
Cooke, Mrs. Mary F.
Coolidge, Joseph
Crocker, James H.
Crocker, George A.
Cushing, T. P.
Cushman, Henry W.
*Child, Richards
Dale, Samuel H.
Dascomb, Thomas R.
Dana, Dexter
Danforth, Isaac
Davis, Charles S.
Davis, James
Davis, James, Jr.

Davis, Joseph
Denny, Daniel
Dix, Miss D.
Dorr, Samuel
Dorr, John
Draper, James
Dwight, William
Dwight, George
Dwight, Mrs. Mary
Dwight, Jonathan
Eager, William
Edwards, Elisha
Ellis, David
Ellis, Jonathan, Jr
Emerson, George B.
Emmons, John L.
Everett, Otis
Fairbanks, Stephen,
Fairbanks, Henry P.
Farley, Mrs. Frederick A.
Fearing, Albert
Fitch, Jeremiah
Fisher, Joshua
Foster, Charles W.
Fowle, C. S.
Foster, Charles A.
Foot, Homer
Francis, Eben
Frost, George
Gasset, Henry
Gould, Benjamin A.
Gould, Lewis
Gray, Harrison
Green, Ezra
Hammond, Daniel
Hammond, Samuel
Hall, Jacob
*Hall, Mrs. Edward B.
Hall, Sarah B.
Hawes, Prince
Hedge, Barnabas
Hewes, Abraham, Jr.
Hewett, H. N.
Heath, Charles
Hendee, Charles J.
Hickling, Charles
Howe, Zadock
Howe, John
Hoar, Samuel
Hodges, George
Holland, Mrs. F. W.
Howard, John
Howard, Charles
Howard, Abraham
Hunt, Nathaniel P.
Inches, Henderson,
Inches, Miss
Jackson, Francis
Jernegan, Mrs. Mary
Johnson, James
Jones, Mrs. J. C.
*Johnson, Milton
Jones, Miss Charlotte
*King, Gedney
King, Daniel P.
King, Samuel B.
*Kuhn, George H.
Lawrence, Amos
*Lawrence, Luther
Lawrence, William

Lamson, Benjamin
Lamson, John
Lane, George
Lewis, S. S.
Lewis, Mrs. S. S.
Lincoln, Oliver
Lincoln, M. S.
Livermore, Isaac
Livermore, George
Lord, George,
Lord, Ivory
Lord, Mrs. Sarah C.
Low, Francis
Low, John J.
Low, Mrs. Rachel
Lombard, Ammi C.
Loring, William J.
Loring, J.
May, Joseph,
May, Samuel
Marsh, Ephraim
Manley, John R.
Manley, Miss Mary
Manley, Mrs. Abigail
Mellen, Michael
*Metcalf, E. W.
Miles, Mrs. Henry A.
Morgan, Charles W.
Morton, Ichabod
Munson, Israel
Newell, J. R.
Newman, Miss Mary
Nichols, Charles C.
Nichols, Miss C. K.
Olmsted, Charles H.
Orne, William W.
Osborn, Kendall
Osgood, Isaac
Otis, Harrison G.
Owen, John
Parker, Daniel P.
Parsons, Thomas
Parsons, William
Parkman, George
*Parkman, Mrs. Sarah
Peabody, Joseph
Peabody, Mrs. W. B. O.
*Peele, Willard
Perkins, Thomas H.
*Pickman, T. Benjamin
Pickman, Dudley L.
Pierce, S. B.
Pierce, John B.
Pray, Lewis G.
Preble, William P.
Prescott, William
Prentiss, John
Phillips, Stephen C.
Phillips, Hon. Jonathan
Phillips, Mrs. John
Putnam, Mrs. George
Rantoul, Robert
Rice, Henry
Richardson, James B.
Rhoades, Stephen
Roberts, Amos M.
Rogers, John
Rogers, John Gray
Russell, John B.
Russell, Nathaniel

Salisbury, Samuel
Saunders, Mrs. Elizabeth
Savage, James
Seaver, George
*Seaver, Charles
Seaver, Benjamin
Sewall, Daniel
Shaw, Robert G.
Shaw, Lemuel
Shaw, Francis G.
Shove, Jonathan
Smith, Melancthon
Smith, Mrs. D.
Smith, Joseph M.
Southwick, Phillip R.
Sprague, Noah P.
*Stanton, Francis
Stearns, Henry
Stephens, Nathan
Stone, Lowell M.
Story, Joseph
Swett, Samuel
Sweetser, Samuel
*Sullivan, William
St. John, Samuel
Stebbins, Festus
Townsend, Henry B.
Thayer, Mrs. Christopher T.
Thomson, John
*Tucker, Richard D.
Tuckerman, Gustavus
Tufts, Mrs. Nathan
Wade, Eben
Wales, Samuel, Jr.
Ward, Artemas,
Watts, Francis O.
Ware, John
Weld, John D.
Weld, Daniel
Weld, Mrs. Martha
Wells, Mrs. Lucia
West, Nathaniel
Wheeler, Jonathan,
White, Charles,
White, Daniel A.
Whitmarsh, Samuel
Whitney, Jonathan
Whitney, B. B.
Willis, William
Wilkinson, Simon
Williams, Moses
Williams, J. D. W.
Williams, David W.
Williams, George F.
Williams, John D.
Williams, Isaac
Worthington, William
Wood, Mrs. J. V.
Whittemore, George
Willard, Miss Polly

TRACTS

PRINTED FOR THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

FIRST SERIES, 12mo.

		Price. Cents.
	Vol. 1.	
No. 1.	The Faith once delivered to the Saints. By H. Ware, Jr.	4
" 2.	One Hundred Scriptural Arguments for the Unitarian Faith.	2
" 3.	On Human Depravity. By Edmund Q. Sewall.	5
" 4.	Omniscience the Attribute of the Father only. By Joseph Hutton.	5
" 5.	On Religious Phraseology. By Orville Dewey.	5
" 6.	A Letter on the Principles of the Missionary Enterprise. By Joseph Tuckerman.	5
" 7.	The Unitarian's Answer. By Orville Dewey.	6
" 8.	A Discourse on the Evidences of Revealed Religion. By William E. Channing.	5
" 9.	Cause of the Progress of Liberal Christianity in New England. By James Walker.	3
" 10.	Remarks on a Popular Error respecting the Lord's Supper. By F. W. P. Greenwood.	2
" 11.	Unitarianism Vindicated against the Charge of not going far enough. By James Walker.	4
	Vol. II.	
" 12.	A Dialogue on Providence, Faith and Prayer.	4
" 13.	A Discourse on being Born again. By Mrs. Barbauld.	3
" 14.	On Experimental Religion. By Convers Francis.	4
" 15.	The Doctrine of Pronouns applied to Christ's Testimony of himself. By Noah Worcester.	5
" 16.	On some Corruptions of Scripture. By Joseph Allen.	5

No.	17.	On Tests of True Religion. By Orville Dewey.	4
"	18.	On the Evidence necessary to establish the Doctrine of the Trinity. By Samuel C. Thacher. . .	3
"	19.	The Apostle Paul a Unitarian. By Caleb Stetson.	5
"	20.	On the Doctrine of Two Natures in Jesus Christ. By Alvan Lamson.	5
"	21.	A Dialogue on some of the Causes of Infidelity.	4
"	22.	Excuses for the Neglect of the Communion considered. By Samuel Barrett.	4
"	23.	A Dialogue between a Christian and a Deist. .	4
"	24.	Divine Revelation advocated and illustrated. .	4
"	25.	The Divine Authority of the Christian Revelation acknowledged.	4

VOL. III.

"	26.	On the Original Text of the New Testament. .	4
"	27.	The Power of Unitarianism over the affections. By John Brazer.	4
"	28.	The Doctrine of Religious Experience explained and enforced. By Samuel Barrett. . . .	4
"	29.	Unitarian Christianity free from objectionable Extremes. By Samuel Gilman. . . .	4
"	30.	On the New Testament conformed to Greisbach's Text. By F. W. P. Greenwood. . . .	4
"	31.	The Danger of Delay. By William Ware. .	5
"	32.	The Theology of the Cambridge Divinity School. By F. W. P. Greenwood.	3
"	33.	On Christian Salvation. By Bernard Whitman. .	6
"	34.	The Divinity of Jesus Christ. By George Ripley.	4
"	35.	The Genius of Christianity. By Wm. H. Furness.	4
"	36.	Evangelical Unitarianism adapted to the Poor and Unlearned. By Alexander Young. . .	4
"	37.	Practical Infidelity briefly considered in reference to the Present Times.	3
"	38.	Thoughts on Vital Religion. . . .	3

VOL. IV.

No. 39. On the Exclusive System. By James Walker. . 5
" 40. The Importance and Method of Early Religious Education. By Henry Montgomery. . . . 6
" 41. On Prejudice. By Samuel J. May. . . 3
" 42. The Prospects and Claims of Pure Christianity. By John G. Palfrey. 5
" 43. The Beneficial Tendency of Unitarianism. By Lant Carpenter. 4
" 44. An Explanation of the Words, "By nature Children of Wrath," found in Ephesians ii. 3. By F. A. Farley. 2
" 45. An Essay for the Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles. By John Locke. 4
" 46. On Piety at Home. By Caleb Stetson. . . 2
" 47. The Antiquity and Revival of Unitarian Christianity. By William Ware. 4
" 48. Mr. Tuckerman's Seventh Semi-annual Report of his Service as a Minister at Large in Boston. . . 5
" 49. The Reports of the American Unitarian Association, prepared for the Sixth Anniversary, May 24, 1831. 5

VOL. V.

" 50. A Comparison of the Good and Evil of Revivals. By E. S. Gannett. 4
" 51. An Answer to the Question, Why are you a Christian? By John Clarke. 5
" 52. The Scripture Doctrine of Redemption by Jesus Christ. By Lant Carpenter. . . . 2
" 53. On Change of Heart. By Cazneau Palfrey. . 3
" 54. Mr. Tuckerman's Eighth Semi-annual Report. . 6
" 55. The Apostle Peter a Unitarian. By Samuel Barrett. 4
" 56. On Substitutes for Religion. By John Pierpont. . 4
" 57. On Zeal. By Joseph Field. . . . 3
" 58. An Outline of the Testimony of Scripture against the Trinity. By Henry Ware, Jr. . . . 4
" 59. What is it to be a Unitarian? By Edward B. Hall. 4
" 60. Mr. Tuckerman's Ninth Semi-annual Report. . 6

No. 61. The Reports of the American Unitarian Association, presented at the Seventh Anniversary, May 29th, 1832. 6

VOL. VI.

" 62. The Gospel Exhibited in a Unitarian Minister's Preaching. By George R. Noyes. . 5

" 63. The Christian Change described by the Apostle Peter. By Convers Francis. 3

" 64. Unitarians entitled to the name of Christians. By Joseph Hutton, LL. D. 4

" 65. My Religious Experience at my Native Home. By Warren Burton. 5

" 66. Mr. Tuckerman's Tenth Semi-annual Report, as a Minister at Large in Boston. . . . 6

" 67. The Practical Importance of the Unitarian Controversy. By W. J. Fox, of London. . . 3

" 68. Some Scriptural Readings, compared with some Unscriptural Sayings. By E. S. Goodwin. . . 4

" 69. The Doctrines of the Trinity and Transubstantiation Compared. By George Ripley. . . . 2

" 70. On Erroneous views of Death. By Orville Dewey. 5

" 71. "Come and See," or the Duty of those who dread the Sentiments of other Christians. By W. B. O. Peabody. 5

" 72. Mr. Tuckerman's Eleventh Semi-annual Report, as a Minister at Large in Boston. . . . 6

" 73. The Eighth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 28, 1833. 6

VOL. VII.

" 74. The Doctrine of Atonement. By the late Rev. Henry Turner, of Nottingham, England. . 4

" 75. Claims of the Gospel on Unitarian Christians. . 4

" 76. Mr. Barnard's First Report of his Service, as a Minister at Large in Boston. 3

" 77. Religious Opinions and Example of Milton, Locke, and Newton. By Rev. Henry Acton, Exeter, England. 6

No. 78. Explanation of Isaiah ix. 6, and John i. 1. By George R. Noyes. 3
" 79. Presumptive Arguments in favor of Unitarianism. By M. L. Hurlburt. 5
" 80. Testimonies from the Neighborhood of the Eternal World on Acceptance with God. By Noah Worcester, D. D. 4
" 81. Jesus Christ not a Literal Sacrifice. By John Pierpont. 4
" 82. Three Important Questions answered relating to the Christian Name, Character and Hopes. By Henry Ware, Jr. 4
" 83. Mr. Barnard's Second Report of his Service, as a Minister at Large in Boston. . . . 3
" 84. The Ninth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 27, 1834. 6

VOL. VIII.

" 85. Excuses for the Neglect of Benevolent Efforts considered. By Andrew P. Peabody. . . 3
" 86. Christ the Image of God. By J. W. Thompson. . 3
" 87. The Philosophy of Man's Spiritual Nature in Regard to the Foundation of Faith. By James Walker. . 4
" 88. The Efficacy of Prayer. By John Brazer . . 4
" 89. The Foundation of our Confidence in the Saviour. By Alvan Lamson. 4
" 90. Apologies for Indifference to Religion and its Institutions Examined. By Samuel Barrett. . . 4
" 91. Hints on Religious Feelings. By Jason Whitman. 4
" 92. Piety and Morality. Their Mutual Importance as Elements of Christian Character. By George Whitney. 3
" 93. The Promise of Jesus to the Pure in Heart. By F. W. P. Greenwood. 2
" 94. Christian Unitarianism not a Negative System. By Ezra S. Gannett. 4
" 95. The Tenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 26, 1835. 6

VOL. IX.

No. 96. A Brief Statement and Explanation of the Unitarian Belief. By Orville Dewey. 3
" 97. False Witnesses Answered. By James Freeman Clarke, Louisville, Ky. 2
" 98. The Existing State of Theology as an Intellectual Pursuit, and Religion as a Moral Influence. By James Martineau, England. . . . 4
" 99. Sober Thoughts on the State of the Times, addressed to the Unitarian Community. . . . 6
" 100. Doctrinal Distinctness not always Doctrinal Differences. By A. B. Muzzey. . . . 3
" 101. A Discourse on the Law of the Spiritual Life. By James Walker. 3
" 102. On Spirituality of Character. By E. Q. Sewall. . 5
" 103. I am the Way. Addressed to those who "Cannot see their way Clear" to observe the Communion. By S. K. Lothrop. 3
" 104. An Argument from Scripture History against the Trinity. By S. G. Bulfinch. . . . 3
" 105. Christianity as a Purely Internal Principle. By Convers Francis. . . . 4
" 106. The Christian Doctrine of Retribution. By George R. Noyes. 3
" 107. The Eleventh Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 24, 1836. . . . 6

VOL. X.

" 108. A Discourse on some of the Distinguishing Opinions of Unitarians. By William E. Channing, D. D. 5
" 109. On Profession of Religion. By Orville Dewey. 5
" 110. Thoughts on the Personality of the Word of God. By Noah Worcester, D. D. . . . 4
" 111. The Scriptural Doctrine of Good Works. By Edward B. Hall. 4
" 112. On the Use and the Meaning of the Phrase "Holy Spirit." By Henry Ware, Jr., D. D. . . 4

No. 113. A Review of Atheism, for Unlearned Christians. By Noah Worcester, D. D. 6

114. Virtue, not Happiness, the End of Man's Creation. By James D. Green. 3

" 115. Why should we labor to extend our Faith? By S. K. Lothrop. 2

" 116. The History of Christ, a Testimony that the Father is the Only True God and sole Object of Adoration. By W. J. Fox. 3

" 117. Religious and Moral Wants of the West. By William G. Eliot, St. Louis, Missouri. . . 3

" 118. On Denying the Lord Jesus. By the late Bernard Whitman. 6

" 119. The Twelfth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 30, 1837. . . . 6

VOL. XI.

" 120. "Come over and Help us." A Letter to Rev. George Putnam. By E. Peabody. . . 4

" 121. "To the Law and to the Testimony." A Discourse on the Deference paid to the Scriptures by Unitarians. By James Walker. . . . 4

" 122. Remarks on Creeds, Intolerance, and Exclusion. By William E. Channing, D. D. . . 4

" 123. Charges against Unitarianism. By E. Peabody. . 3

" 124. A Tribute to the Memory of the Rev. Noah Worcester, D. D. By William E. Channing, D. D. 4

" 125. The Nature, Reality, and Power of Christian Faith. By Henry Ware, Jr., D. D. . . . 3

" 126. The Sunday School. A Discourse pronounced before the Sunday School Society. By William E. Channing, D. D. 4

" 127. What is Truth? By Andrew Peabody. . . 3

" 128. A Young Man's Account of his Conversion from Calvinism. A Statement of Facts. . 5

" 129. True Grounds of Christian Unity. By George Putnam. 5

" 130. A Rational Faith competent to the Wants of Man. 4

No. 131. The Thirteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 29, 1838. . . . 6

VOL. XII.

" 132. The Duty of Promoting Christianity by the Circulation of Books. By H. Ware, Jr. . . 4
" 133. The Future Life. By William E. Channing, D. D. 4
" 134. Repentance the Ground of Forgiveness. By Joseph Hutton, LL. D. 4
" 135. The Worship of the Father, a Service of Gratitude and Joy. By William E. Channing, D. D. . 5
" 136. Reason and Revelation. By A. A. Livermore. . 3
" 137. Fidelity in Duty not Accuracy in Belief, our Test of the Christian Character. By A. P. Peabody, 3
" 138. The Unitarian Reform. By James F. Clarke. . 3
" 139. Truths joined by God not to be sundered by Man. By Samuel Osgood. 3
" 140. On the Atonement. By Edward B. Hall. . . 3
" 141. Unitarianism Vindicated against the Charge of Skeptical Tendencies. By James Walker. . . 4
" 142. Remarks on the Sacred Scriptures, and on Belief and Unbelief. By Orville Dewey. . . 4
" 143. The Fourteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 29, 1839. 6

VOL. XIII.

" 144. On Mystery, Reason and Faith. By Rev. E. Peabody. 3
" 145. Who was Jesus Christ? By Rev. Geo. F. Simmons. 5
" 146. Jesus Christ the Chief Corner Stone. By Rev. G. R. Noyes, D. D. 3
" 147. How to Spend a Day. By Henry Ware, Jr., D. D. 3
" 148. Life and Character of the Rev. Aaron Bancroft, D. D. By Rev. Alonzo Hill. . . . 4
" 149. Atonement. By Rev. Ezra S. Gannett. . . 4
" 150. Thoughts for the New Year on the Duty of Improvement. By Henry Ware, D. D. . . 3

No. 151. The Moral Power of Christ's Character. By Rev. E. Peabody. 4
" 152. Christian Views of Human Suffering. By William E. Channing, D. D. 4
" 153. Watch and Pray. By Rev. Robert C. Waterston. 3
" 154. Practical Goodness the True Religion. By Rev. F. H. Hedge. 3
" 155. The Fifteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 26, 1840. . . . 6

VOL. XIV.

" 156. The Doctrine of the Cross. By Rev. J. W. Thomson. 4
" 157. The One Thing Needful. By Rev. Thomas B. Fox. 3
" 158. The Scripture Doctrine of Regeneration. By Rev. C. W. Upham. 4
" 159. The Power of Unitarian Christianity to produce an Enlightened and Fervent Piety. By W. E. Channing, D. D. 4
" 160. An Individual Faith. By Rev. George E. Ellis. . 3
" 161. How to Spend Holy Time. By Rev. H. Ware, Jr. 3
" 162. On the New Birth. By Rev. Frederick T. Gray. 3
" 163. On Prayer. By Rev. John H. Morrison. . . 3
" 164. Reasons Offered by Samuel Eddy, LL. D., Late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island, for his Opinions to the First Baptist Church in Providence, from which he was compelled to withdraw for Heterodoxy. . . . 4
" 165. Man born upright. By Rev. A. B. Muzzey. . 3
" 166. Unitarianism Defined and Defended; being Extracts from Lectures delivered at Liverpool in 1839, by three Unitarian Ministers, in Answer to Lectures against Unitarianism, by thirteen Clergymen of the Episcopal Sect. 6
" 167. The Sixteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 25, 1841. . . 6

VOL. XV.

" 168. The Death of Christ. By Rev. George G. Ingersoll. 4

No. 169. Unitarianism, a Devotional Faith. By Rev. J. Scott Porter, of Belfast, Ireland. . . . 3
" 170. The Coming of Christ. By Rev. A. P. Peabody. 3
" 171. Short Prayers for the Morning and Evening of every day in the week, with occasional Prayers and Thanksgivings. 4
" 172. On the Uses of the Communion, and the Propriety of a General Attendance upon it. By Orville Dewey, D. D. 3
" 173. "How is it that ye have no Faith?" By Rev. Henry A. Miles. 3
" 174. Domestic Worship. By Rev. Caleb Stetson. . 3
" 175. The Apparent Darkness of God's Providence. By John Brazer, D. D. 3
" 176. Sympathy in Congregations. By Rev. Frederick A. Farley. 3
" 177. The Unitarian's Appeal. Three Sermons, Illustrative of the Claim of Unitarians to the Character of Evangelical Christians, Independent of the Truth of their Peculiar Opinions. Preached in the Unitarian Church, Washington City, by S. G. Bulfinch, Pastor of that Church. . . 5
" 178. Unitarianism a Benevolent Faith. By Rev. J. Scott Porter, of Belfast, Ireland. . . . 3
" 179. The Seventeenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 24, 1842. . . . 6

VOL. XVI.

" 180. What gives Support in Death? By Rev. M. I. Motte. 3
" 181. Christ the Way to God. By Rev. Convers Francis, D. D. 3
" 182. On the Nature and Province of Natural and Revealed Religion. By Orville Dewey, D. D. . 4
" 183. On Experimental Religion. By Orville Dewey, D. D. 3
" 184. Righteousness the Central Principle of Christianity, and the True Basis of the Unitarian Denomination. By Rev. E. S. Gannett. . . . 4

No. 185. Religious Forms and Observances. By Rev. Nathaniel Hall. 2
" 186. Unitarianism not a New Doctrine, but Genuine Christianity. By Rev. James D. Green. . 4
" 187. An Address delivered at the Funeral of Rev. William Ellery Channing, D. D., Oct. 7, 1842. By Rev. Ezra S. Gannett. 4
" 188. Earnestness in Religion. By Rev. Alvan Lamson, D. D. 3
" 189. Small Sins. By Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., D. D. . 3
" 190. "What Thinkest Thou?" or Ten Questions Answered. By Rev. Samuel Barrett. . . 3
" 191. The Eighteenth Report of the American Unitarian Association, with the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, May 30, 1843. 6

SECOND SERIES — 18MO.

No. 1. Objections to Unitarian Christianity Considered. By William E. Channing. 2
" 2. A Serious and Friendly Address to the Anxious Inquirer. 2
" 3. One God and One Mediator. 2
" 4. The Apostles' Creed, as contained in their public Discourses. 1
" 5. Two Objections to the right and duty of Free Inquiry and Private Judgment answered. By Jonathan Mayhew. 1
" 6. Suggestions respecting the Formation of Auxiliaries to the A. U. A. 2
" 7. Funeral Consolations. By Thomas Emlyn. . . 3
" 8. A Pastoral Letter by a Unitarian Minister. . . 2
" 9. Ejaculatory Prayer, Daily Use of Scripture. By Joseph Tuckerman. 2
" 10. On Revivals. By Jonathan Farr. . . . 2
" 11. Twenty Questions to Trinitarians, with Answers from Scripture. By James Kay. . . 2
" 12. A Funeral Address. By Rev. Samuel Ripley. . 1

INDEX TO VOLUME XVI.

A.

An Address delivered at the funeral of Rev. William Ellery Channing, D. D. By Rev. Ezra S. Gannett, p. 157.
Arnold, Rev. Mr., of Southington, Con., his remarks at the anniversary, 270.
Anniversary, Committee on it, 279.
Auxiliary Associations, 252.

B.

Barrett, Rev. Samuel, his Tract, No. 190. What thinkest thou? 221.
Brief explanation of the texts which have been relied upon to prove the Deity of Christ, 153.
Bible, the only creed of Unitarians, 123.

C.

Channing, Rev. William H., his remarks at the Anniversary, 277.
Christ the way to God. By Convers Francis, D. D. 1st. May it not be stated as a fact in spiritual history, that there is such a thing as alienation from truth and righteousness? 2d. But now, says Paul, "in Christ Jesus ye who were some time far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ," that is, by the divine efficacy of his mission, hallowed and sealed by his death on the cross, 13.
Christ, how he saves us, 139.
Councillors of the A. U. A. 250.

D.

Dewey, Orville, D. D., his Tracts, Nos. 182 & 3. p. 25, 53.
Destitute societies, the number aided, &c., 253.

E.

Experimental Religion. By Orville Dewey, D. D., p. 53.
Earnestness in Religion. By Rev. Alvan Lamson, D. D., 187.
Eighteenth annual Report of the Executive Committee, 251.

F.

Francis, Rev. Convers. his Tract, No. 181, p. 13.
Finance, committee on it, 279.

G.

Gannett, Rev. Ezra S., his Tract, No. 184, on Righteousness; p. 69, and No. 187, an Address delivered at the funeral of William Ellery Channing, D. D., 157.
Green, Rev. James D., his Tract. No. 186. Unitarianism not a new doctrine, but genuine Christianity, 117.
Gage, Rev. Mr., of Petersham, his remarks at the Anniversary, 259.

H.

Hall, Rev. Nathaniel, his Tract, No. 185, on "Religious forms and observances," 104.

J.

Jesus Christ, as regarded by Unitarians, Tract 190, p. 235.

L.

Lamson, Rev. Alvan, D. D., his Tract, No. 188, on Earnestness in Religion, 187.
Life members of the A. U. A., 282.

M.

Motte, Rev. M. I., his Tract, No. 180, on What gives support in death, 1.
Missions, committee on them, 279.
Missionaries, the number employed, &c., 253.

N.

Natural and Revealed Religion, by Orville Dewey, D. D. I. And, first, let us consider what is the proper nature, and what is the distinct province of Natural Religion. II. Let us proceed to consider the subject of Revealed Religion. 25.

O.

Officers of the A. U. A., 249.
Officers of the Council of the A. U. A., 279.

P.

Prejudices manifested against Unitarianism by other denominations, 254.
Parkman, Rev. Mr., of Dover, N. H., his remarks at the Anniversary, 266.
Proceedings of the Annual meeting, 245.

Q.

Questions relating to the doctrines and duties of religion, considered and answered, Tract 190. p. 221,

R.

Righteousness the central principle of Christianity, and the true basis of the Unitarian denomination. By Rev. Ezra S. Gannett, 69.
Religious forms and observances, by Rev. Nathaniel Hall, 104.
Robbins, Rev. S. D., his remarks at the Anniversary, 264.

S.

Small Sins. By Rev. Henry Ware, jr., D. D. 1. Life is made up of little things. 2. There is a close connexion between events. 3. Small faults to be avoided, because we are so much the creatures of habit. 4.—to be avoided because they are acts of disobedience to God. 5. We must act from principle. 6. By indulgence in small sins we injure religion in the opinion of other men. 7. A good character always acquired and always lost by little things, 207.

Statement of the receipts and expenditures of the A. U. A., 245.

T.

Ten questions answered. By Rev. Samuel Barrett, 221.

Tracts, committee on them, 279.

Tracts, the number published the past year, 253.

Treasurer's statement of receipts and expenditures, 245.

U.

Unitarianism not a new doctrine, but genuine Christianity. By Rev. James D. Green, 118.

Unitarians, in what light they regard the Savior. Tract 186. p. 137.

W.

Ware, Rev. Henry, jr., D. D., his Tract, No. 189, on Small Sins, 207.

What gives support in death? Tract 180, by Rev. M. I. Motte, 1.

What thinkest thou? or ten questions answered. By Rev. Samuel Barrett. 1. What thinkest thou of human nature? 2.—of man's power relatively to the duties his Maker requires of him? 3.—of sin and its consequences? 4—of virtue and its rewards? 5.—of Divine Providence? 6.—of the chief end of God's moral government? 7.—of Christ and the cross? 8.—of the outward means of grace—the sacred oracles, the Lord's day, the church, the ministry, the baptismal rite, the ordinance of commemoration? 9.—of the Gospel in its entireness, as regards its claims, sufficiency, and influence? 10.—of God himself? 221.

Walworth, Rev. Mr., his remarks about assuming the name of Unitarian, 256.

DATE DUE

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

GTU Library
3 2400 00377 1783

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.